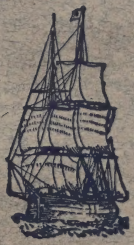
SEA SONGS AND BALLADS

By C. Fox Smith

Author of "Sailor Town Days"



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SAILOR TOWN DAYS

By C. Fox Smith

THIS is a book about ships and sailors and the byways of seaport towns the world over — from London River to the Pacific Coast. There are chapters on Ratcliff Highway, China Clippers, Paradise Street in Liverpool, "junk" stores, waterside churches, unlucky ships, Chinatown, Dagoes and Dutchmen, and bucko mates.

Saturated with the author's love of the sea and ships, SAILOR TOWN DAYS will quicken the pulses of all the readers to whom such writers as Masefield and Conrad make a strong appeal.

SEA SONGS AND BALLADS
1917–22

THE THREE SHIPS

SEA SONGS AND BALLADS 1917-22

BY

C. FOX SMITH

AUTHOR OF "SAILOR TOWN DAYS"

WITH SIX ILLUSTRATIONS BY
PHIL W. SMITH

BOSTON AND NEW YORK
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NOTE

This volume contains—as well as some poems not before published in book form—selections from four previous volumes: SMALL CRAFT, ROVINGS *and* SHIPS AND FOLKS (*Elkin Mathews, Ltd.*), *and* RHYMES OF THE RED ENSIGN, *published by Messrs. Hodder & Stoughton; to whom, and to the Proprietors of* PUNCH *and the Editors of the "London Mercury," "The Sphere," "The Windsor Magazine" and other periodicals, the author is indebted for permission to reprint.*

SEA SONGS AND BALLADS, 1917–1922

SOU' SPAIN

ARE you coming, Johnnie Bowline, have you had your fill of fun?
Are you ready, Johnnie Bowline, now your pay-roll's spent and done,
And your welcome's growing stale,
And your pals begin to fail,
And there's something seems to whisper that it's time to sign again—
Time to hit the trail you know,
Time to pay your shot and go,
Time to heave your donkey's-breakfast in and sail Sou' Spain!

Are you coming, Johnnie Bowline, have you kissed your girl adieu?
There's a lofty skysail clipper, and I think she waits for you,
And she's ready for the sea,
And the Peter's flying free,

And the wind goes through her rigging like a ranting
old refrain :—
"Time to find a ship once more,
You've been over long ashore,
Time to hump your old sea chest aboard and sail
Sou' Spain!"

Hurry up now, Johnnie Bowline, for she hasn't long
to stay,
Get a move on, Johnnie Bowline, if you mean to
come away,
For the tide is at the flood,
And the anchor's off the mud,
And they're tramping round the capstan in the dark-
ness and the rain,—
And when oilskins and sea chest
Go the way of all the rest,
Oh, it's time to take the pierhead jump and sail
Sou' Spain!

Sou' Spain, Sou' Spain, in the grey dawn breaking
chill!
Sou' Spain, Sou' Spain, give it lip, lads, with a will!
Oh, don't you weep for me, for me, my lovely Liza
Jane,
You'll soon forget your sailorman that's sailed Sou'
Spain!

THE FLYING-FISH SAILOR

(Old Style)

"THE Western Ocean rolls and roars
From Sandy Hook to Europe's shores,
From Fastnet Light to Portland, Maine,
And Newport News and back again,
With Boston, Salem, Montreal,
And plenty o' ports both large and small,
And them that like may keep 'em all,
Not me," says the flying-fish sailor.

The Western Ocean roars and rolls
With all its deeps and all its shoals,
And many a thundering wintry gale,
And many a storm of rain and hail,
And let who likes have sleet and snow,
And driving fog and drifting floe,
For South away and Eastward Ho!
Is the road for the flying-fish sailor.

In Blackwall Dock a ship is moored,
Her hatches on and her stores aboard,
In Blackwall Dock she lies to-day,
And she will sail when the morning's grey

For Sunda Strait and Singapore,
And Palembang and plenty more,
And many a swarming Eastern shore
That's known to the flying-fish sailor.

The girls they'll cry and the lads'll shout
When the blooming tugboat warps her out:
We'll drop the pilot off the Nore
With fond farewells to take ashore
To mothers, wives and sweethearts too—
Love to Sally and love to Sue—
And that's the last for a year or two
You'll see of the flying-fish sailor.

We'll drop the tug and we'll bear away
Down the Channel, across the Bay;
The Western Isles we'll leave behind
And make the Line with the good Trade wind:
We'll see the dolphins sport and play,
(And haul our yards ten times a day),
While South'ard still we beat our way,
The way of the flying-fish sailor.

And forty south when we have passed,
Her easting down she runs at last,
Where the white whale swims in the far South sea,
And the brave West winds blow full and free:
The good old winds they bluster and blow
The same as they used to years ago,
And the good old stars that well we know
Look down on the flying-fish sailor.

The darned old hooker 'll log sixteen,
She'll ship it heavy and ship it green,
She'll roll along with her lee-rail under,
While the big seas break aboard like thunder:
The pots and pans they'll carry away,
And the cook go down on his knees and pray,
But let the seas roar as they may,
All's one to the flying-fish sailor.

At Sydney next a call we'll pay,
And meet a pal on Circular Quay;
We'll glance at Java Head also,
And Fuji's crest of frozen snow,
And slant-eyed girls in far Japan,
Wun Lee, Wang Ho and little Yo San,
With braided hair and twinkling fan,
Will smile on a flying-fish sailor.

And last of all the day'll come round
When the blooming mudhook leaves the ground,
And to old England we return,
Our pockets filled with pay to burn,
With a painted fan and an ivory comb
From foreign towns beyond the foam,
And a golden ring for the girl at home
That waits for the flying-fish sailor!

LONDON SEAGULLS

THE pigeons of the Abbey, the pigeons of Saint Paul's,
That woo in windy niches of grey and grimy walls,
The pearl-grey dawns of London, his sky that gleams and glooms,
His stately smoky sunsets are in their changing plumes.

The saucy London sparrows, their Cockney chatter tells
Their parents nested surely in earshot of Bow Bells . . .
But oh! the London seagulls a-cruising up and down,
They're most like old-time seamen come back to London town.

Old salty swearing seadogs and tarry buccaneers,
With bacca quids and pigtails and ear-rings in their ears,
That spent their money handsome and took their ease ashore
In rowdy Ratcliff aleshops with sand upon the floor...

LONDON SEAGULLS

And bawled their old sea-ballads, and told their thumping lies,
In fearsome deep sea lingo to open landsmen's eyes,
And drained their brimming pewters, and spat into the tide,
In old shipboarded taverns by Wapping waterside . . .

And saw there at their moorings the Geordie colliers rock,
The latest pirate dangling at Execution Dock,
The anchored ships unloading their silks and laces fine,
And spices from the Indies, and rum, and Spanish wine . . .

And watched the busy wherries all plying with their fares,
From Globe, Jamaica, Wapping and Cherry Garden Stairs,
And the lighters and the barges a-passing to and fro
As they did on London River two hundred years ago.

MAINSAIL HAUL

" I DON'T want none of 'is stuff," said Bill,
" nor I don't want none of 'is gear,
I don't want things as I've knowed 'im use nor things as I've seen 'im wear :
It ain't such things as them," he said, " an' that's the truth, my son,
'Ull make me think o' Mike my pal, now Mike 'e's dead an' gone.

" There's Bluenose Pete 'e wants 'is palm an' the knife 'e wouldn't sell,
An' Jake 'e wants 'is good seaboots, 'cos 'is own they leak like hell,
An' one wants this an' one wants that, the way chaps do at sea—
Well, let them take their pick, says I, they can 'ave the lot for me.

" An' they can 'ave 'is teakwood chest wi' the paintin' as 'e did
O' the ' Southern Cross ' off Sydney 'Eads, full sail, inside the lid,

An' the marline spike 'e always used, an' the bottled ship 'e made,
Rollin' up to the Western Isles, close-hauled on the Nor' East Trade.

" For Mike an' me was pals," said he, " an' I couldn't bring my mind
To wrangle like a greedy gull for the gear 'e left behind :
We've sailed together rough an' smooth, we've stuck it, sink or swim,
An' it ain't Mike's bits o' things, God knows, 'ull make me think of 'im.

" It's sun an' stars an' fog an' frost an' blue weather an' grey,
An' big seas curlin' green as glass afore they break in spray,
An' sudden dark on tropic seas dropped like a blind that's drawn,
An' stormy sunsets off the capes an' strange landfalls at dawn.

" It's drunkards shoutin' scraps o' songs in waterfront saloons,
An' two-stringed fiddles Chink girls play thrum-thrummin' queer old tunes,
An' the papery noise the palm-trees make when offshore winds are wakin',
An' the fellers singin' out on the brace, an' the royal clew a-shakin'.

" It's things you eat an' things you drink in all the ports you know,
An' the raspy twang o' Spanish wine, an' mule trains tinklin' slow,
An' the steamy reek of Eastern towns an' stuffy smoky smells
In shrines where fat pot-bellied gods sit smilin' to theirsels.

" It's things you see an' things you 'ear an' things you feel an' do,
They bring the dead alive again, they make the old years new,
An' it ain't Mike's bits o' things I'll want, an' that's God's truth, my son,
To make me think o' Mike my pal, now Mike 'e's dead an' gone."

THE STATELY BLACKWALLER

SHE hauled through the dock-gates when morning was young,
And chill on the water the river mist hung,
And the chaps on the pierhead all shouted " Hooray "
For the stately Blackwaller bound Eastward away.

Her captain he walked on his poop like a lord,
They piped the side handsome when he came aboard :
She had mates half-a-dozen in brassbound array,
The stately Blackwaller bound Eastward away.

She had midshipmen, topmen and gunners and all,
And forty prime shellbacks to heave and to haul,
A bosun to pipe and a fiddler to play,
The stately Blackwaller bound Eastward away.

So down London River she vanished afar :
Her gallant red ensign it shone like a star,
Till she faded from sight in the river mist grey,
The stately Blackwaller bound Eastward away.

She dropped the tug's hawser and so did depart
By Dungeness and Dover, by Spithead and Start,

And headland by headland their farewells did say
To the stately Blackwaller bound Eastward away.

Then shaking her reefs out she turned to the south,
Her canvas all gleaming, a bone in her mouth,
To the warm tropic seas where the flying fish play—
The stately Blackwaller bound Eastward away.

But the years have gone by like a tale that is told,
And home through those waters that knew her of old,
By Goodwin and Girdler, by Chapman and Nore,
The stately Blackwaller comes sailing no more.

Down the river of years she has vanished afar,
With all her proud fabric of sail and of spar,
She has faded from sight as a mist in the sun—
The stately Blackwaller of days that are done.

RESURRECTION

DOWN at Devine's Hotel—where night and day
The noises of the harbour find their way,
The endless stir of ships coming and going,
Rattle of cranes and winches, sirens blowing,
Racket of ships in drydock, bawled commands,
And scraps of sailor speech from many lands—
While through the breath-dimmed windows of the bar
You see the fluttering houseflags, crown and star,
Chequer and cross, chevron and prince's-feather,
And funnels, streaked and stained with grime and weather,
Buff, yellow, scarlet, black—with here and there
A big sea-going schooner, stark and bare,
In from the Nova Scotian coast with lumber . . .
And now and then one of the dwindling number
Of proud squareriggers lifts there, slim and tall,
The wonder of her spars above them all,
To stir the old shellback's heart, and loose his tongue
With old wild yarns of the years when he was young . . .

Down at Devine's Hotel the talk went round
Of all the ports from Hull to Puget Sound,
Of sprees in foreign harbours, women, wine,
Cargoes, and ships, and weather foul and fine,
And—in the jumbled talk of false and true—
My heart leapt up to greet a name I knew.

It was the *Britomart* they spoke of—she
That was most dear of all my ships to me—
She, first of many ships to which I gave
Strength, service, labour, love—a willing slave . . .
Macrae of Greenock built her—she was fine
Like all Macrae's ships—fine and clean of line,
And tall—maybe a shade too heavy-sparred,
Skysails she crossed, and a ninety-foot mainyard,
And yet with all that sail a boy could steer her . . .
There was none but *Cutty Sark* that could come near her
Running the easting down . . . Her very name
In that drink-sodden place was like a flame
Lighting the heart with memories . . . ay, well
They knew that name in the Paragon Hotel,
When all the wool fleet crews blew in together
With many a shellback's yarn of wind and weather
From London to the Heads, and to and fro
Went speech of ships now vanished long ago—
Mermerus, Sobraon, John o' Gaunt, Loch Sloy,
Salamis, Cimba, Torrens, Yallaroi—
Sounding and stately names of stately clippers—
And roaring reckless mates and hard-case skippers . . .

Great ships, great days . . . oh had I wealth and
leisure,
Money to burn, and fortune's smiles full measure,
Comfort and ease and fame desired of men,
I would give all to live those years again!

"She run on the rocks all standing," some one said,
"Bass Point the place was, hard by Lizard Head . . .
Thick fog . . . that thick you couldn't see your
hand . . .
The skipper'd thought himself well clear of land . . .
Lord knows what made him miss his reckoning
so . . .
Mistook the Wolf for Saint Agnes . . . I dunno . . .
The ol' barky's back was broke, we couldn't save
her . . .
A grand old ship . . . the old man cried to leave
her . . ."

So, she is gone . . . oh better, better so!
Whatever must come, this at least I know,
I shall not on some bleak and bitter day,
Walking the wharves, an old man bent and grey,
See her . . . befouled with spittle and with grime,
Battered with brutal cargoes, stained with slime,
Paint-daubed and pitted, blistered and forlorn,
A thing for some to pity, most to scorn,
Like some lost Princess, lonely and unfriended,
Whom once a train of busy courtiers tended . . .
And knowing in that moment, all unwilling,
The measure of youth's dream and life's fulfilling,

Shed the slow difficult tears old eyes must know,
To see remembered beauty brought so low.

Better the winds and waves should work their will
on her—
Better the rocks and reefs should feast their fill on
her!
For still, while any lives that loved as I
That beauty which was hers in years gone by,
Still shall she sail at will, a gracious ghost,
Each well-known seaway, each familiar coast,
Still in the Trades the drowsy lookout hail
On the sea's rim her dawn-flushed spire of sail,
Still in the crowded harbours of the world
To staves unheard her viewless sails be furled,
Still in the high South latitudes shall she
Measure anew her might with wind and sea,
Fight her fight over with the seas that roll
Green and tremendous from the Antarctic Pole,
Still—like a mist through morning mists agleam—
Signal her pilot for the ports of dream. . . .
What's past can never perish—what has been
Lives, and lives on, through all the years between:
The years shall bring her beauty: lost youth lend
her
His vanished gleam, lost dreams their morning splen-
dour.
Unchanged, unchanging, in a world of change,
She shall endure, though all things else grow strange,
And, though her bones to rust and dust be gone,
Find in men's dreams her resurrection.

A YARN OF DAN'S

"NOW 'ere's a yarn as is true," said Dan,
"an' you can't say that o' most:
I was in the packet *Mogador* an' bound
to the Chile coast,
An' there was a chap in the watch wi' me—a greaser
from Brazil—
An' 'is name it was Pedro (or Josey, maybe), but we
mostly called 'im Bill.

An' 'e was the rottenest sort of a bloke in the sailor-
izin' line
As ever you see in your life—leastways, as ever I
see in mine:
'E couldn't pull 'is weight on a rope, 'e could neither
reef nor furl,
I give you my word in a gale o' wind 'e was worse
nor a seasick girl.

The mate we 'ad was a down-east Yank, an' 'e was
sure a terror,
'E fairly wallered in paint an' pitch, an' that's no
fatal error.

It was 'olystonin' an' scourin' paint an' keepin' brass-
work bright,
An' chippin' anchors an' scrapin' seams, from morn-
in' until night.

Well, me an' Bill we was tarrin' down on the crojick
yard one day,
The packet snorin' along like fun an' shippin' dollops
o' spray,
An' Bill 'e slumped 'is bucket o' tar, which was just
what you might expeck,
'Arf of it over a brand-new course an' the rest on
the fresh-scoured deck.

The mate 'e let a roar like a bull when 'e seen what
Bill 'ad done
As fetched the 'ole o' the watch below on deck to see
the fun,
An' 'e jumped for the shrouds an' started aloft with
a face that was fit to kill,
An' into the drink with a flop an' a splash an' a Dago
yell went Bill.

The mate 'e squinted over the rail an' saw Bill swim-
min' strong,
An' 'e started kickin' 'is seaboots off, an' that didn't
take 'im long,
An' over the rail in a brace o' shakes in all the rest
of 'is gear
'E follered Bill like a streak o' light—an' you should
'ave 'eard us cheer!

The Old Man passed the word along to 'eave the packet to,
'I can't afford for to lose my mate, an' a thunderin' good mate too,
So lower away the quarter boat, an' pull, my lads, with a will,
But I'm darned if I'd lower a boat,' says he, 'for a lump o' stuff like Bill.'

Well, we lowered the boat, an' we pulled away, but that ain't part o' the yarn,
An' we picked 'em off o' the buoy we'd throwed, best part of a mile astern:
The mate 'e'd got Bill's 'ead in 'is arm in a kind of a strangle 'old,
With 'is fingers twisted into 'is wool as if 'e'd been stuffed with gold.

We hauled 'em in by the slack o' their pants, an' as soon's we 'd got 'em aboard
The mate 'e blew a bubble or two an' 'e got 'is breath an' roared:
'I'll larn ye spilin' my deck, ye swab,—by thunder so I will!' . . .
An' they give 'im a pair o' binoculars along o' savin' Bill!"

FOLLOW THE SEA

"WHAT is it makes a man follow the sea?
Ask me another!" says Billy Magee:
"Maybe it's liquor and maybe it's love—
Maybe it's likin' to be on the move—
Maybe the salt drop that runs in his blood
Won't let his killick lie snug in the mud:
What is it makes such poor idjits as me
Follow the sea—follow the sea? . . .
Jiggered if I know!" says Billy Magee.

"What is it keeps a chap rollin' around
All his life long from the Skaw to the Sound?
Samplin' the weathers from Hull to Rangoon—
Doldrums an' westerlies, Trade an' typhoon—
Hurricane, cyclone an' southerly buster—
In any old drogher as flies the Red Duster?
What is it makes a chap follow the sea—
Follow the sea—follow the sea—
Bust me if I know!" says Billy Magee.

"What is it makes a man stick to the sea?
Ah, you may ask me!" says Billy Magee.
"Stick to it hungry an' stick to it cold,
Stick to it after he's broken and old,

Freeze in the Forties an' sweat on the Line,
Shiver an' burn in the rain an' the shine,
Stick it until he can't stick it no more—
Curse it an' leave it for something ashore—
Chuck up his shore job an' follow the sea—
Stick to an' live by an' die by the sea—
Search me if I know!" says Billy Magee.

BILL'S CHRISTMASES

"CHRISTMAS," said Bill, "on Christmas cards, it's winders all aglow,
An' lots o' stuff to eat an' drink an' a good three feet o' snow,
An' a bunch o' bouncin' girls to kiss under the mistletoe.

Holly an' robin redbreasts too, as rosy as can be,
An' waits an' chimes an' all such gear as you never get at sea,
But it's different things as Christmas means to a ramblin' bloke like me.

The first I ever 'ad at sea I was 'ardly more 'n a nipper,
An' I'd took an' signed, bein' young an' green, in a dandy Down-east clipper
With a bullnecked beast of a bucko mate an' a rare tough nut of a skipper.

An' we dined 'andsome, so we did, off biscuits an' salt 'orse,

An' finished up with scraper duff an' sand-an'-canvas
sorce,
An' them as growled got seaboot soup by way of an
extry course.

I've 'ad my Christmas 'ere an' there, I've 'ad it up
an' down,
I've 'ad it sober on the seas an' drunk in sailor-town,
I've 'ad it where the folks are black an' where the
folks are brown,

And under many a tropic sky an' many a foreign
star,
In Perim, Portland, Pernambuck, Malacca, Malabar,
Where the rum bird-'eaded totem poles an' the
gilded Buddhas are.

I've 'ad it froze in Baltic cold an' burned in Red Sea
'eat,
I've 'ad it in a Channel fog as busy as a street,
An' once I 'ad it off the 'Orn, an' that was sure a
treat.

I was in the clipper *Sebright* then—a big ship, 'eavy
sparred,
With every sort o' flyin' kite an' a seventy foot
mainyard,
An' 'andlin' 'er in a gale of wind, I tell you, it was
'ard!

We come on deck for the middle watch, an' save us,
'ow it blew!
A night like the devil's ridin' boots, that never a
star shone through,
An' the seas they kep' on poopin' 'er till we 'ad to
'eave 'er to.

We snugged 'er down, we 'ove 'er to, an' there all
night lay she,
With one mainyard arm pointin' to 'eaven an' one
to the deeps o' the sea,
Dippin' 'er spars at every roll in the thunderin' foam
alee.

Till the wind an' sea went down a bit an' the dawn
come cold an' grey,
An' we laid aloft an' loosed the sails an' squared the
ship away,
An' a chap beside me on the yard says, 'Bill, it's
Christmas Day!'"

THE BUILDERS

"There is not much poetry in a ship-yard as a rule."
—*The Times.*

NOT here the grace of the sonnet's flow,
The blithe ballade and the smooth rondeau,
The minstrel's tale and the wooer's sighs,
And the lovelorn lay to a ladye's eyes . . .

Here shall a lordlier rhythm be found
In the throb and beat of the hammer's sound,
A rugged chant with a bold refrain,
A rougher rhyme and a sterner strain.

The ancient rune of the venturer man,
Builder of ships since the world began,
To brave the perils and dare the ways
Of the sea that serves him, the sea that slays.

Centuries gone, it was shaped and sung,
Centuries gone when the world was young,
When first he launched on the trackless tide
His cockleshell craft of boughs and hide—

The same old song that is always new
(Be it liner, longship or bark canoe),
The same to-day in a world grown old
As it was when they sailed for the fleece of gold:

A song of strength and a song of speed,
Of the dream made true and the word made deed,
In bow and bulwark and ribs and keel
An epic in iron, an ode in steel.

SHIPWRECK

"SHE struck one night on a sunken ledge
Off the Scillies, homeward bound,
Four month out for the Surrey Docks
With deals from Puget Sound.
Her back was broke, she couldn't live,
As any man might see,
An' it's 'ard to see a good ship go
The way she went," said he.

"An' I lost my oilskins an' sea boots,
An' all my bloomin' gear,
An' my chest with fancy shackles on
I'd 'ad this many a year.
There warn't no time to think o' them,
Lord knows, in such a sea,
But—it's 'ard to lose your chest an' gear
The way we done," said he.

"An' better ships than 'er maybe
I'll sign in yet, my son,
An' chest an' gear I'll get again
As good as them that's gone:

But never a chap in all the world
Like him that's drowned an' dead,
An' it's 'ard to lose a man's best pal
The way I done," he said.

THE RETURN

"WHEN did your ship dock, Jim Dale;
That you come so late this night?
Long since I heard the clocks strike three,
And it will soon be light.

How did you get in, Jim Dale,
With the doors all locked and barred?
I never heard you knock nor call,
Nor the dog bark in the yard.

They told me you were drowned and dead
In the South Seas cold and far,
At Paddy's Goose the tale was told,
And the Old Mahogany Bar.

Why do you look at me so sad,
So strange, and shake your head?
They told me you were dead and drowned,
I cried my poor eyes red. . . .

But it's hard for girls to walk alone
For the sake of them that's dead."

He pointed to her faithless name
On his bare breast tattooed,
And ever the dripping wet in streams
Ran from him where he stood.

One moment, and she saw him clear—
The next, and he was gone,
Like a fitful moonbeam through the room
Passing—but no moon shone.

She heard no lifting of the latch,
No footstep on the stair,
No board that creaked in the still house
To show he had been there.

And up the street and down the street
No man might she behold,
But the cloaked policeman on the beat
Striking his chest for cold.

She saw the rain come slanting down,
The sheds, the high dock wall,
The masts and funnels of the ships,
The derricks gaunt and tall.

And through the darkness and the rain
    The light came creeping grey,
And all along the dreary street
    The gas-lamps paled to day.

PORT O' DREAMS

"THERE'S a deal o' ports," said Murphy, " an' I guess I've sampled most—
Round about the Gulf o' Guinea, up an' down the Chili coast,
In the Black Sea an' the Baltic an' the China seas I've been,
An' the North Sea an' the South Sea an' the places in between.

An' the ports as look the finest turns out some'ow worst of all—
For I lost my chum in Rio in a Dago dancin' 'all,
An' I lost my bloomin' 'eart once to a wench in Callao,
An' I lost my youth in Frisco . . . but that's years an' years ago.

But there's one I've never sighted out of all the ports there be:
It's a place a feller talked of as was shipmates once with me

In the hooker *Maid of Athens*—she was one of Dunc Macneill's,
She went missin' many a year since bound from Steveston home with deals.

An' this feller said the drinks there are the best a man could find,
An' a sailor's always welcome, an' the girls are always kind,
An' there's dancin' an' there's singin' an' there's every sort o' fun
In the plaza of an evenin' when the lazy day is done.

An' the blessed old Pacific he keeps singin' like a psalm
To the shippin' in the roadstead an' the firefly in the palm,
An' the days are never scorchin' an' the nights are never 'ot
In that port 'e used to yarn of with the name I've clean forgot.

An' I'll never fetch that harbour, but it's maybe for the best,
For I daresay if I found it it'd be like all the rest,
An' I like to think it's waitin', waitin' all the while for me,
With the red wine an' the white wine an' the dancin' an' the spree,
An' the fireflies gleamin' golden in the palms I'll never see!"

IN THE TRADES

HO, let her rip—with her royal clew a-quiver,
And the long miles reeling out behind—
For the Trade's got a hold of her and every rope's a-shiver
With the strong and steady urging of the wind.

All the gleaming white of her, all the sun and shade
Leaning, swaying to the seas,
All up the height of her the South-east Trade
Humming like a swarm of bees.

Underneath the heel of her the white wake flying,
Tumbled and trampled into snow—
Down below the keel of her the lost ships lying
In the weed and the coral, far below . . .

ROVINGS (1921)

GHOSTS IN DEPTFORD

IF ghosts should walk in Deptford, as very well they may,
A man might find the night there more stirring than the day,
Might meet a Russian Tsar there, or see in Spain's despite
Queen Bess ride down to Deptford to dub Sir Francis knight.

And loitering here and yonder, and jostling to and fro,
In every street and alley the sailor-folk would go,
All colours, creeds, and nations, in fashion old and new,
If ghosts should walk in Deptford, as like enough they do.

And there'd be some with pigtails, and some with buckled shoes,
And smocks and caps like pirates that sailors once did use,

And high sea-boots and oilskins and tarry dungaree,
And shoddy suits men sold them when they came
fresh from sea.

And there'd be stout old skippers and mates of
mighty hand,
And Chinks and swarthy Dagoes, and Yankees lean
and tanned,
And many a hairy shellback burned black from
Southern skies,
And brassbound young apprentice with boyhood's
eager eyes.

And by the river reaches all silver to the moon
You'd hear the shipwrights' hammers beat out a
phantom tune,
The caulkers' ghostly mallets rub-dub their faint
tattoo—
If ghosts should walk in Deptford, as very like they
do.

If ghosts should walk in Deptford, and ships return
once more
To every well-known mooring and old familiar
shore,
A sight it were to see there, of all fine sights there
be,
The shadowy ships of Deptford come crowding in
from sea.

Cog, carrack, buss and dromond—pink, pinnace, snake and snow—
Queer rigs of antique fashion that vanished long ago,
With tall and towering fo'c'sles and curving carven prows,
And gilded great poop lanterns, and scrolled and swelling bows.

The Baltic barque that foundered in last month's North Sea gales,
And last year's lost Cape Horner with the wonder on her sails,
Black tramp and stately liner should lie there side by side—
Ay, all should berth together upon that silent tide.

In dock and pond and basin so close the keels should lie
Their hulls should hide the water, their masts make dark the sky,
And through their tangled rigging the netted stars should gleam
Like gold and silver fishes from some celestial stream.

And all their quivering royals and all their singing spars
Should send a ghostly music a-shivering to the stars—

A sound like Norway forests when wintry winds are high,
Or old dead seamen's shanties from great old days gone by,—

Till eastward over Limehouse, on river, dock and slum,
All shot with pearl and crimson the London dawn should come,
And fast at flash of sunrise, and swift at break of day,
The shadowy ships of Deptford should melt like mist away.

JOHN COMPANY'S SHIPS

(East India Dock)

JOHN COMPANY'S ships, they sailed the seas—
The *Merchant's Hope* and the *Trade's Increase*,
Globe and *Dragon* and *Hector* too,
Thames and *Canning* and *Waterloo*—
With gums and ingots and spice and silk,
Blood-red rubies and pearls like milk . . .
Idols of ivory, cups of jade,
Caskets of ebony gold-inlaid,
Lacquer and crystal, gifts for kings,
Brass and filigree, beads and rings,
Rugs like the sunset, madder and gold,
John Company's ships brought home of old.

John Company's ships, they were steady and slow,
Their tops'ls came in when it started to blow,
For their hulls were roomy and round and wide,
Bluff in the bows and big in the side,
And they loaded them deep and they crammed them full
With the cargoes they bought from the Great Mogul . . .

But they held their own when it came to a scrap
With a Barbary rover or any such chap,
And many a pirate or privateer
That had smacked his lips as the prize drew near
Limped home with his wounds at the last to tell
John Company's ships could fight as well.

. . . . . .

John Company's ships, they went their way,
They cleared and they sailed for Dead Men's Bay,
With captains gallant in blue and gold,
And bawling bosuns and seamen bold,
Bows all splendid with gilt and glitter,
Pennants streaming and pipes a-twitter,
Carven stern-ports and guns arow,
Flashing brasses and decks like snow—
They went their way: and the gulls they call
On London's river, by old Blackwall,
And the winds they blow and the tides they run
The same to-day as they've always done:
But they are gone like a tale that's told—
John Company's ships of the days of old.

"SOLD FOREIGN"

(Lady Dock)

IN Lady Dock, in Lady Dock, the ships from far and wide
Lay down their loads of fragrant deals the dusky sheds beside,
And there come in, a dwindling few, the old ships year by year
That bore the grain from Frisco Bay, the wool from Geelong Pier—

Swift champions of the days of sail, whose old-time far renown
Still lives in many a shellback's yarn and song of Sailortown,
Sold foreign in their latter days to drudge the years away
Till time or chance shall bring them all to berth in Dead Man's Bay.

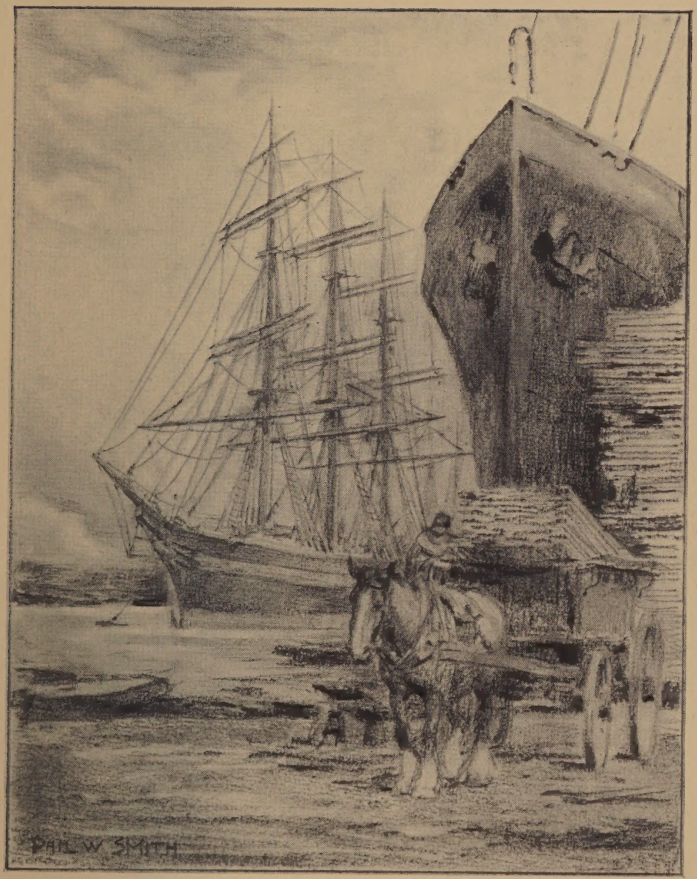
In Lady Dock, in Lady Dock, as I was strolling by,
Among the tramps and lighters there I saw an old ship lie,

That still, for all her foreign name and foreign flag beside,
A seaman's eye might surely know a daughter of the Clyde.

The sunset light was on her spars; the sunset splendour made
A glory in her ragged gear, her rigging slack and frayed;
It fired her battered figurehead, and, passing, touched with flame
Among her scrollwork's tarnished gold her new outlandish name.

But little need had I to learn what name was hers of old
From wheel or bell or pitted brass on capstan green with mould,
Who knew it like my christened own, as any man would know
The ship's that shared his goodliest years in days of long ago.

Her mizen yards were gone, and lopped the tapering boom that bore
The threshing of her mighty jibs in many a gale of yore;
Her planking gaped at many a seam, her paint was bleached and bare,
And dull was all her burnished brass, and rust was everywhere.



"SOLD FOREIGN"

But tender as a lad's first love, and brave as boyhood's dream,
Above the Deptford lumber sheds her shining spars did gleam;
A light that was not sunset seemed about her yards to glow,
And all her freight was golden years brought out of long ago.

And there were shipmates of old time and folks that well I knew,
That looked and laughed as I went by as once they used to do;
And up and down her rutted decks, the littered gear among,
A lad went with me all the while I lost when I was young.

And through the dusty Deptford streets and noisy Rotherhithe,
With springing step and glancing eye and eager heart and blithe,
A lad walked with me all the way I knew in years gone by,
A lad I met by Lady Dock . . . and O! that lad was I!

A SHIP IN A BOTTLE

IN a sailormen's restaurant Rotherhithe way,
Where the din of the docksides is loud all the day,
And the breezes come bringing off basin and pond
And all the piled acres of lumber beyond,
From the Oregon ranges the tang of the pine
And the breath of the Baltic as bracing as wine. . . .
Among the stale odours of hot food and cold,
In a fly-spotted window I there did behold
A ship in a bottle some sailor had made,
In watches below, swinging South with the Trade,
When the fellows were patching old dungaree suits,
Or mending up oilskins and leaky sea-boots,
Or whittling a model, or painting a chest,
Or smoking and yarning and watching the rest.

In fancy I saw him—all weathered and browned,
Deep crows'-feet and wrinkles his eyelids around;
A pipe in the teeth that seemed little the worse
For Liverpool pantiles and stringy salt horse. . . .
The hairy forearm with its gaudy tattoo
Of a bold-looking female in scarlet and blue. . . .
The fingers all roughened and toughened and scarred,
With hauling and hoisting so calloused and hard,

So crooked and stiff you would wonder that still
They could handle with cunning and fashion with skill
The tiny full-rigger predestined to ride
To its cable of thread on its green-painted tide
In its wine-bottle world while the old world went on,
And the sailor who made it was long ago gone.

And still as he worked at the toy on his knee,
He would spin his old yarns of the ships and the sea,
Thermopylæ, Lightning, Lothair and *Red Jacket,*
And many another such famous old packet—
And many a tough bucko and daredevil skipper
In Liverpool blood-boat and Colonies clipper—
The sail that they carried aboard the Black Ball,
Their skysails and stunsails and ringtail and all,
And storms that they weathered, and races they won,
And records they broke in the days that are done.

Or else he would sing you some droning old song,
Some old sailor's ditty both mournful and long,
With queer little curlycues, twiddles and quavers,
Of smugglers and privateers, pirates and slavers,
"The brave female smuggler," the "packet of fame
That sails from New York, an' the *Dreadnought's* her name,"
And "all on the coast of the High Barbaree,"
And "the flash girls of London were the downfall of he."

In fancy I listened—in fancy could hear
The thrum of the shrouds and the creak of the gear—
The patter of reef-points on tops'ls a-shiver—
The song of the jibs when they tauten and quiver—
The cry of the frigate-bird following after—
The bow-wave that broke with a gurgle like laughter—
And I looked on my youth with its pleasure and pain,
And the shipmate I loved was beside me again . . .
In a ship in a bottle a-sailing away
In the flying-fish weather through rainbows of spray,
Over oceans of wonder by headlands of gleam
To the harbours of youth on the wind of a dream!

LAVENDER POND

(Surrey Commercial Docks)

NEVER a swallow wets his wing
In Lavender Pond from Spring to Spring;
Never a lily, pure and chill,
Holds her cup for the dews to fill;
Never a willow, gnarled and hoar,
Bends his boughs to a reedy shore;
Never a fragrant flower-spike blows there,
Never a lordly king-staff grows there,
Slender and straight where sedges shiver
And glistening Mayflies glance and quiver,
In Lavender Pond by London River.

But the Baltic barques they come and go
With their old pump-windmills turning slow,
And the tall Cape Horners rest and ride
Like stately swans on the murky tide,
And the ocean tramps all red and rusted,
Worn and weathered and salt-encrusted,
Gather and cluster near and far,
Derrick and funnel, mast and spar,
From many a port of old renown,
And lonely wharf where the booms float down,
To Lavender Pond by London town.

And keen and strong is the wind that comes
To the dingy streets of the Deptford slums,
Strong and keen with the scent it steals
Off piled-up acres of Kalmar deals,—
Spruce and cedar and baulks of pine,
Red with resin and drenched with brine,
Sawn from the boles that once did stand
Rank on rank in a virgin land,
Where the cougar prowls through the silent glades
In the forest depths of the far Cascades. . . .
And the gulls go flying, the gulls go crying,
And the wind's sob and the water's sighing
Croon to the ships an old sea ditty
In Lavender Pond by London city.

ANCHORS

IN a breaker's yard by the Millwall Docks,
With its piled-up litter of sheaveless blocks,
Stranded hawsers and links of cable,
A cabin lamp and a chartroom table,
Nail-sick timbers and heaps of metal
Rusty and red as an old tin kettle,
Scraps that were ships in the years gone by,
Fluke upon stock the anchors lie.

Every sort of a make of anchor
For trawler or tugboat, tramp or tanker,
Anchors little and anchors big
For every build and for every rig,
Old wooden-stocked ones fit for the Ark,
Stockless and squat ones, ugly and stark,
Anchors heavy and anchors small,
Mushroom and grapnel and kedge and all.

Mouldy old mudhooks, there they lie!
Have they ever a dream as the days go by
Of the tug of the tides on coasts afar,
A Northern light and a Southern star,

The mud and sand of a score of seas,
And the chuckling ebb of a hundred quays,
The harbour sights and the harbour smells,
The swarming junks and the temple bells?

Roar of the surf on coral beaches,
Rose-red sunsets on landlocked reaches,
Strange gay fishes in cool lagoons,
And palm-thatched cities in tropic noons;
Song of the pine and sigh of the palm,
River and roadstead, storm and calm—
Do they dream of them all now their work is done,
And the neaps and the springs at the last are one?

And only the tides of London flow,
Restless and ceaseless, to and fro;
Only the traffic's rush and roar
Seems a breaking wave on a far-off shore,
And the wind that wanders the sheds among
The ghost of an old-time anchor song:—

"Bright plates and pannikins
To sail the seas around,
And a new donkey's breakfast
For the outward bound!"

COASTWISE

THE ships that trade foreign, to London they bear
Their cargoes unnumbered both common and rare,
Their bales and their gunny-sacks, tea-chests and cases,
From all kinds of countries and all sorts of places,
Their copra and teakwood, their rum and their bacca,
Their rice and their spice from Rangoon and Malacca,
Their sugar and sago from far Singapore,
And lumber, and logwood, and manganese ore.

But they that trade coastwise unceasing do ply
On lawful occasions to Ramsgate and Rye,
To Lowestoft and Lymington, Padstow and Poole,
And Falmouth and Fowey and Gorleston and Goole,
The North-country colliers, smutty and small,
The barges and bawleys and schooners and all,
The *Janes* and *Elizas* and *Belles* and the rest,
Two Brothers, *Trafalgar*, and *Pride of the West*.

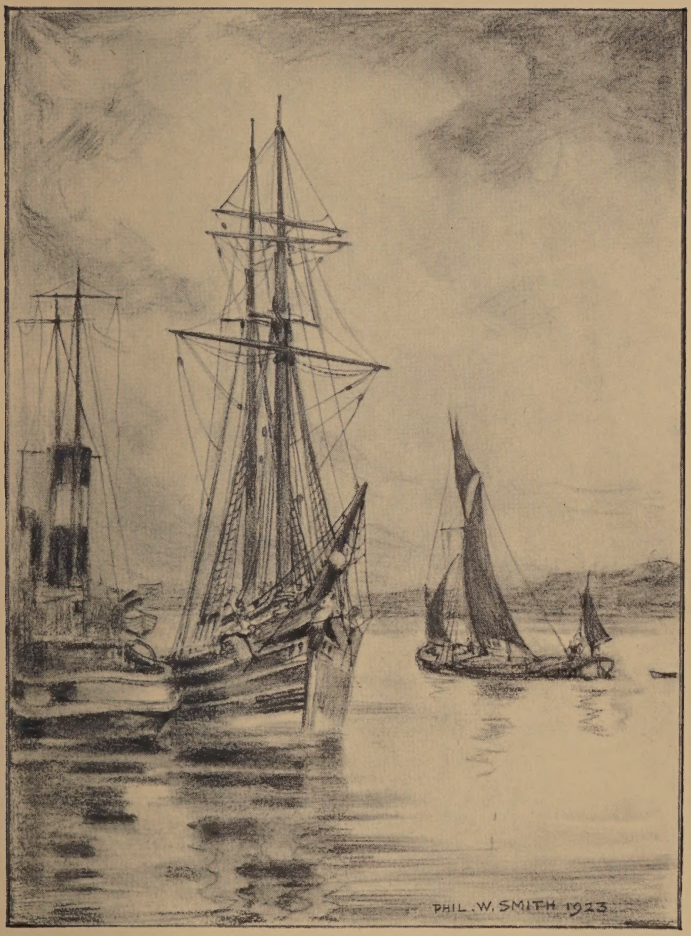
The ships that trade foreign, wide oceans they know,
Far down to the South'ard they see the whales blow,

Great bergs like cathedrals they likewise behold,
And flying fish shining all silver and gold:
They know the far islets of pearl and of pine,
The Trades and the tempests from Leeuwin to Line,
From the Horn to the Hooghly their smoke-trail is curled,
And their bow-wave is white on the seas of the world.

But they that trade coastwise, they know the salt seas
That surge evermore round the grey mother's knees,
The tide-rips and swatchways, the deeps and the shoals,
Each eddy that dimples, each current that rolls
By Longships and Lizard, by Bishop and Clerk,
And the fangs of the Manacles, deadly and dark,
By reef and by sandbank, by headland and holm,
And Scilly's lone outposts of thunder and foam.

The ships that trade foreign see cities afar,
Where the black and the brown and the yellow folk are,
The tin towns and timber towns, mud towns and all,
From the Straits of Le Mair to the Bay of Bengal.
Of Rio and Sydney the charms they compare,
And others name Frisco than either more fair,
The lordly St. Lawrence they mark in his flow,
And Fraser and Hudson and mighty Hwang-ho.

But they that trade coastwise know little stone quays
With old salts a-smoking and taking their ease,



COASTWISE

The smell of the seaweed, the nets in the sun,
The snug little tavern where old yarns are spun,
The coastguard, the flagstaff, the boats in the bight,
The herring gulls mewing by day and by night,
The flash of the lighthouse that flings forth its ray
To ships trading foreign that pass on their way.

LUMBER

IF I'd got to choose alone
One of all the freights I've known—
All my cargoes live and dead,
Bacon pigs and pigs of lead,
Cattle, copra, rice and rails,
Pilgrims, coolies, nitrates, nails,
Lima beans and China tea—
What do you think my pick would be?

If I'd got to name the best—
Take just one and leave the rest
Out of all the ports I've known—
Coral beaches white as bone,
All the hot lands and the cold,
Nights of stars and moons like gold,
Tropic smells and Spanish wine,
Whispering palm and singing pine,
All the isles of all the sea—
Where do you think I'd want to be?

Loading lumber long ago
In a ship I used to know,

With the bow-ports open wide
In her stained and rusted side,
And the saws a-screaming shrill
At the Steveston lumber-mill;
Where the Fraser floods and flows
Green and cold with melting snows,
And the tow-boats' wailing din,
As the booms come crawling in,
Fills the echoing creeks with sound,
And there's sawdust all around,
Deep and soft like drifted snow;
Nowhere much a man can go,
Nothing much to see or do,
Mouldiest burg you ever knew. . . .

But I'd give the years between—
All I've done and all I've seen,
All the fooling and the fun,
All the chances lost and won,
All the good times and the bad,
All the memories sweet and sad,
Far and near, by shore and sea,
I would give them all to be
Loading lumber years ago
With the lads I used to know—
Loading lumber all day long
Stacks of scented deals among—
Loading lumber at the mill
Till the screaming saws were still,
And the rose-red sunset died
From the mountains and the tide,

And the night brought out its stars,
And the wind's song in the spars
Of that ship I used to know—
Loading lumber, long ago.

OLD STORMY

"STORMY'S dead," I heard them say, "he's dead and gone to rest";
Of all the skippers I have known old Stormy was the best,
His name was known on every sea, his fame on many a shore,
And Stormy's dead, that good old man, he'll sail the sea no more.

A rough old, tough old nut of an old-style hard-case skipper
As ever cracked on sail in a racing Melbourne clipper,
And hung on to his topsails in bad weather off the Horn,
And made a crew of deadbeats wish they never had been born.

In the Western Ocean packets had old Stormy served his time,
He had known the Blackwall frigates and the tea-fleet in its prime,

In the days of single topsails, stunsails, Jamie Greens and all,
Stormy'd sailed for Hell or Melbourne in the ships of the Black Ball.

He was skipper of the *Sheba*—she was one of Farlane's best,
Sister ship to *Eldorado* and *Golconda* and the rest,
" Farlane's yachts " they always called them from Blackwall to Sandridge Pier,
Slashing ships and smart as frigates—skysail yards and lots o' sheer.

" *Sheba's* luck " they used to talk of in the ports both near and far,
For he drove her like a demon, but she never lost a spar,
Roaring westward in the forties with her maindeck white with foam,
Flying light with Gippsland fleeces on the long sea road for home.

Twenty years old Stormy had her, and he loved her like his own,
But the day of steam was coming and the day of sail had flown,
And the times they kept on changing, and the freights they fell away,
And they sold the *Sheba* foreign, for they said she didn't pay.

And old Stormy heard the tidings with a sad and sorry heart,
"Twenty years," he said, "I've had her, and it's bitter hard to part,
Twenty years we've been together, but I'm getting old, I know,
And they've sold the *Sheba* foreign, and it's time for me to go."

So he left the little *Sheba* for to start her life anew,
With a whiskered Dago captain and a greasy Dago crew,
And a brand-new Dago ensign where the Duster used to be. . . .
But the *Sheba's* luck had left her when old Stormy left the sea.

And she barged away down Channel in the equinoctial gales,
With a black nor'-easter blowing, and she loaded down with rails,
And the seas they pooped her cruel, and a big one broached her to,
And she couldn't seem to right herself, for all that they could do,
And the water came aboard her, and her masts went overside,
And she took and drowned herself at last, the night old Stormy died.

RETROSPECT

"AIN'T it rum?" said Dan one day,
Yarning while he worked away
At his model, all but done,
Of the clipper ship *Keemun*—
Fully rigged and all to scale,
Shroud and backstay, spar and sail,
Tiny blocks and tackles fine,
Tacks and sheets of Hambro line,
Dainty skysails fairy-small,
Stunsails, Jamie Green and all—
"Ain't it sort o' rum," said he,
"Human natur, seems to be—
How a feller never knows
What he likes best—till it goes?

"Take the ports I used to know—
How I cussed 'em years ago,
Cussed the insecks an' the stinks,
Cussed the lingo an' the drinks,
Cussed the blacks for bein' black,
Cussed the lot to—Hull an' back!
Never thought how some fine day
I'd sit yarnin' here an' say

What I'd give to see again
Just them things I hated then—
Talk and tell how nothin' else
Smells just like them Eastern smells—
Finish up with 'Seems to me
Ports ain't what they used to be!'

"Take this ship, the old *Keemun*,
Names I've called 'er, many a one;
Called 'er cranky, stubborn, slow,
Bad aloft an' worse below,
Worst darned ship I'd set my eyes on,
Pikin' pay and grub like pison,—
Never thought I'd come to spend
All the time I've spent on end
('Alf a year's dog-watches good)
Carvin' of 'er out o' wood—
Fight a feller in a pub
Cos he called 'er 'blinkin' tub' . . .
Funny, ain't it? . . . seems to me
Ships ain't what they used to be.

"Chaps I've sailed with—thought per'aps
Pretty much like other chaps,
Maybe liked an' maybe not,
Drunk with, scrapped with, half forgot—
Never thought I'd come to say,
Thinkin' of 'em far away,
'Them was fellers, them was men,
Shipmates they was shipmates then,

Lookin' back, why, seems to me
Chaps ain't what they used to be.'

" That's the way I've always found
Things turn out, the whole world round;
If it's gals or ships or beer
Don't much matter, ain't it queer
(Human natur, I suppose)
How a feller never knows
What he likes best—till it goes? "

SHIPS AND FOLKS

MISSING

SHE was spoken off Saint Vincent, outward bound . . .
Some lumber-laden barque from Puget Sound,
Heaving her sodden deck-load through the foam,
Weary of sea-ways, climbing the hill for home . . .
Some nine-knot tramp from Melbourne or Bombay,
Wallowing deep-freighted on her homeward way,
Her grimy decks awash, her blistered funnel
Leprous with salt, sea-stained from keel to gunwale,
Rust-streaked, and battered with the Cape Horn gales,
Sighted at grey of dawn her shining sails . . .
White as a woman's breasts they gleamed afar,—
Her gilded main-truck flashing like a star,—
And the first shafts of sunrise turned to gold
Her sleek side, heaving upward as she rolled. . . .
So passed she by—and those who watched her go
Thought of that road they had good cause to know,
Thought how, when they were sheltered dry and warm,
She would go plunging through some night of storm,

All hands aloft, reefing the steel-hard sails,
Cursing . . . with frozen hands and bleeding
nails . . .
Her yards sheeted with ice . . . her leaning deck
A seething flood men toiled in to the neck . . .
Then thought of winking glasses, warmth and noise—
Good pay to burn—and sordid seaport joys—
Saying: "Who'd change with them chaps now?"
—and yet
Still felt a strange half-envy, half-regret,
Such as men may who, ease and wealth attained,
And their full measure of good fortune gained,
From the safe harbour of their middle years
Look back on youth, its burning hopes and fears,
Its unattempted capes and unsailed sea,
Landfalls unguessed, and all things yet to be,
Fond dreams, fantastic loves, and dark despair,—
Know it for ever fled—know it was fair . . .
So passed she by—her tall masts swaying, singing,
Sailors (mere specks) on dizzy footropes swinging,
Whence, looking down, they saw beneath them
spread
All her slim length from stern to foc's'le head,
The cleft wave streaming from her wedge of bow,
Where the carved warrior with his casqued brow
Leaned always out over the sea's unrest,
With arms laid crosswise on his mailed breast,
And eyes that, all unseeing, seemed to gaze
Out to the ultimate end of all men's ways . . .
Passed . . . till hull down on the horizon's rim
Her lonely beauty lessened and grew dim . . .

Passed . . . like a song unfinished, a broken
rhyme . . .
And the sea's silence took her for all time.

She will not come . . . oh, never, never more
Shall she draw near to any earthly shore;
In storm or calm—in foul weather or fine—
Fast-hurrying wrack or watery pale sunshine—
Frost when the jackstay burns the naked hand—
Odours of forests blowing off the land—
Chill driving mist, or roar of tropic rain—
Dawn, noontide, sunset, dark . . . never again!
No more at sunrise, all the winds at rest,
The sea rose-dappled like a pigeon's breast,
Shall her black tug—a dwarf leading a queen—
Bring her the lighthouse-guarded strait between . . .
No more, when folk ashore begin to stir,
And wood-smoke hangs on the sharp morning air,
Her sailormen, tramping the capstan round,
Shall wake the sleeping anchorage with sound—
Lifting some wild sea shanty of old time,
Some ancient strain wedded to rough old rhyme—
"Lowlands away" or "Rio Grande"—unheard
Each trivial phrase, each vile and worthless word,
Only the strange wild cadences remaining,
Full of the sea's voice and the wind's complaining,
The sad old wistful melody that seems
The stuff of old men's memories, young men's
dreams . . .
No more for her along the anchored tiers
Shall all the shipping ripple into cheers

Of welcome or farewell . . . no more again
On any tide her restless cables strain . . .
Nor any landlocked roadstead more behold
Her mirrored pride . . . no harbour see her fold,
After long wanderings come at last to shore,
Her weary wings at sunset any more . . .
Never again to any foul lagoon
Or fetid river in the reek of noon,
Or any lone teredo-fretted quay
Where pine-clothed ranges echo all the day
The crash of falling forests . . . bustling hong,
Or small white Spanish town its palms among . .
Or where the gleaming Andes hold on high
Their spears in challenge to the sunset sky . . .
To any port of all the ports there be
Shall she come with her beauty from the sea.

Aye, all that grace and beauty, strength and speed
All that she was, are now no more indeed—
Ropes, hard and hairy as a seaman's hand—
Planking, scoured white as bone with stone and sand—
Fiferails with staunch belaying-pins arow—
And racks of capstan-bars—and sails like snow—
And standing rigging gleaming black and white—
Clean smells of tar and paint—and brasses bright
As gold in the sun—and darkly shining teak . . .
That little ordered world, austere and bleak
As some bare chapel of a monkish creed
That asks not pomp nor pride for its soul's need . . .

No more, that strength, that swiftness and that grace,
Than one blown foam-flake on the ocean's face—
No more than one of all the million bubbles
Beneath some proud ship's forefoot, when she troubles
The tumbled whites and blues of tropic seas
A little, and is gone—no more than these,
Less than the least small shell the ocean sweeps
Through winds and waves and unimagined deeps,
Far from the warmth of blue West Indian seas,
And gaudy parrots screaming through the trees,
Hot tropic smells, and fireflies, and the song
Of Trade winds in the palm-trees all day long,
To the cool greys and blues of temperate skies,
Cold tide-left pools, and the strange seabirds' cries,
And the pink sea-thrift on the headlands blooming,
And in the hollow caves the Atlantic booming.

Where rests she now ? . . . On what Antarctic shore
Where nothing grows but lichens, grey and hoar
As the pale lips of death . . . and nothing moves
On the long beaches, in the deep sea-coves,
But uncouth sea-beasts in their secret, strange
Matings and breedings . . . nothing seems to change
Year by slow year . . . and the fog comes, and the floe,
And the sea thunders, and the great winds blow . . .
And on still wings great birds go sailing by,
Seeking, with slantwise head and watchful eye,
Scraps for their naked nestlings . . . and the time
Comes, and the time goes, and the ocean slime

Coats her with foulness, and the seaweeds green
Clothe her, whom once men tended like a queen . . .

Let be! . . . She is one with all things that have been—
Embers of longing—ashes of desire—
And hope grown cold—and passion quenched like fire—
Friendship that death or years or the rough ways
Of chance have sundered . . . all things meet for praise,
Lost yet remembered, that were ours of yore—
Things lovely and beloved, that are no more. . . .

THE PACKET RAT

WHEN I leave this Western Ocean, to the South'ard I will steer
In a tall Colonial clipper, far an' far enough from here,
Down the Channel on a bowline, through the Tropics runnin' free—
When I've done wi' the Western Ocean—an' when it's done wi' me!

An' I'll run my ship in Sydney, an' then I'll work my way
To them smilin' South Seas islands where there's sunshine all the day,
An' I'll sell my chest an' gear there, as soon 's I hit the shore,
An' sling away my last discharge an' go to sea no more.

It's a pleasant time they have there—they've easy, quiet lives—
They wear no clo'es to speak on—they've a bunch o' browny wives;

An' they're bathin' all the day long, or baskin' on
the sand,
All along wi' them Kanakas as naked as your hand.

An' I'll lay there in the palm shade, an' take my
ease all day,
An' look across the harbour to the shippin' in the
bay,
An' watch the workin' sailormen—the bloomin' same
as me,
In the workin' Western Ocean, afore I left the sea.

I'll hear 'em at the capstan bars, a-heavin' good an'
hard:
I'll hear 'em tallyin' on the fall, an' sweatin' up the
yard,
Hear 'em lift a halliard shanty, hear the bosun swear
an' shout,
An' the thrashin' of the headsheets as the vessel goes
about.

An' if the fancy takes me—as it's like enough it may—
Just to smell the old ship smells again, an' taste the
salt an' spray,
I can take a spell o' pearlin' or a tradin' trip or two
Where it's none but golden weather an' a sky that's
always blue.

But I'll do no sailorizin' jobs . . . I'll walk or lay
at ease,
Like a blessed packet captain just as lordly as you
please,

With a steward for my table an' a boy to bring my beer,
An' a score or two Kanakas for to reef an' furl an' steer.

An' when I'm tired o' cruisin' up an' down an' here an' there,
There'll be kind Kanaka women wi' the red flowers in their hair,
All a-waitin' there to welcome me when I come in from sea,
When I've done wi' this 'ere ocean . . . but that'll never be.

For I'd hear the parrots screamin', an' the palm-trees' drowsy tune,
But I'd want the Banks in winter, an' the smell of ice in June,
An' the hard-case mates a-bawlin', an' the strikin' o' the bell,
God! I've cursed it oft an' cruel . . . but I'd miss it all like hell!

Yes, I'd want the Western Ocean where the packets come an' go,
An' the grey gulls wheelin', callin', an' the grey skies hangin' low,
An' the blessed lights o' Liverpool a-winkin' in the rain,
For to welcome us poor packet rats come back to port again.

An' if I took an' died out there, my soul 'd never stay
In them sunny Southern latitudes to wait the Judgment Day,
All across the seas from England I should hear the old life call,
An' the bloomin' Western Ocean it'd get me after all.

I'd go flyin' like a seagull, as they say dead shellbacks do,
For to see the ships I sailed in an' the shipmates that I knew,
An' the tough old North Atlantic where the winds do always blow,
An' the Western Ocean packets all a-plyin' to an' fro.

An' I'd leave the Trades behind me, an' I'd leave the Southern Cross,
An' the mollymawks an' flyin' fish an' stately albatross,
An' I'd steer through wind and weather an' the seafogs white as wool,
Till I sighted old Point Lynas an' the Port o' Liverpool.

Then I'd fly to some flash packet when the 'ands was bendin' sail,
An' I'd set up on the main-truck doin' out my wings an' tail,

An' I'd see the tug alongside, an' the Peter flyin' free,
An' the pilot come aboard her for to take her out to sea.

An' I'd follow down to Fastnet light, an' then I'd hang around,
There to watch 'em out to Westward an' to greet 'em homeward bound . . .
For I know it's easy talkin'—an' I know when all is said
It's the bloomin' Western Ocean what 'll get me when I'm dead!

THE THREE SHIPS

I HAD tramped along through dockland till the day was all but spent,
But for all the ships I there did find I could not be content:
By the good pull-ups for carmen and the Chinese dives I passed,
And the streets of grimy houses each one grimier than the last,
And the shops whose shoddy oilskins many a sailor-man has cursed
In the wintry Western Ocean when it's weather of the worst . . .
All among the noisy graving docks and waterside saloons,
And the pubs with punk pianos grinding out their last year's tunes,
And the rattle of the winches handling freight from near and far,
And the whiffs of oil and engines, and the smells of bilge and tar,
And of all the craft I came across the finest for to see
Was a dandy ocean liner . . . but she wasn't meant for me!

She was smart as any lady, and the place was fair alive
With the swarms of cooks and waiters, just like bees about a hive;
It was nigh her time for sailing, and a man could hardly stir
For the piles of rich folks' dunnage here and there and everywhere;
And the stewards and the awnings and the white paint and the gold
Take a deal of living up to for a chap that's getting old,
And the mailboat life's a fine one . . . but a shellback likes to be
Where he feels a kind o' homelike after half his life at sea . . .
So I sighed and passed her by—"Fare you well, my dear," said I,
"You're as smart and you're as dainty as can be,
You're a lady through and through, but I know it wouldn't do,—
You're a bit too much a rich man's gal for me!"

So I rambled on through dockland, but I couldn't seem to find
Out of all the craft I saw there just the one to please my mind;
There were tramps and there were tankers, there were freighters large and small,
There were concrete ships and standard ships and motor ships and all,

And of all the blessed shooting-match the one I liked the best
Was a saucy topsail schooner from some harbour in the West.
She was neat and she was pretty as a country lass should be,
And the girl's name on her counter seemed to suit her to a T;
You could almost smell the roses, almost see the red and green
Of the Devon plough and pasture where her home port must have been,
And I'll swear her blocks were creaking in a kind of Devon drawl—
Oh, she took my fancy rarely—but I left her after all!
For it's well enough, is coasting, when the summer days are long,
And the summer hours slip by you just as sweetly as a song,
When you catch the scent of clover blowing to you off the shore,
And there's scarce a ripple breaking from the Land's End to the Nore;
But I like a bit more sea-room when the short dark days come in,
And the Channel gales and sea-fogs and the nights as black as sin,
When you're groping in a fairway that's as crowded as a town,
With the whole damned Channel traffic looking out to run you down,

Or a bloody lee-shore's waiting with its fierce and foaming lips
For the bones of poor drowned sailormen and broken ribs of ships . . .
So I sighed and shook my head—" Fare you well, my dear," I said,
" You're a bit too fond of soundings, lass, for me,
Oh, you're Devon's own dear daughter, but my fancy's for deep water,
And I think I'll set a course for open sea ! "

So I tramped along through dockland, through the Isle of Dogs I went,
But for all the ships I found there still I could not be content . . .
Till not far from Millwall Basin, in a dingy, dreary pond,
Mouldy wharf-sheds all around it, and a breaker's yard beyond,
With its piles of rusty anchors and chain-cables large and small,
Broken bones of ships forgotten—there I found her after all.
She was foul from West Coast harbours, she was worn with wind and tide,
There was paint on all the bright work that was once her captain's pride,
And her gear was like a junk-store, and her decks a shame to see,
And her shrouds they wanted rattling down as badly as could be . . .

But she lay there on the water just as graceful as a gull,
Keeping some old builder's secret in her strong and slender hull:
By her splendid sweep of sheer-line and her keen, clean clipper bow
You might know she'd been a beauty . . . and by God, she was one now!
And the river gulls were crying, and the sluggish river tide
Made a kind of running whisper by her red and rusted side,
And the river breeze came murmuring her tattered gear among,
Like some old shellback, known of old, that sings a sailor's song—
That whistles through his yellowed teeth an old deep-water tune
(The same did make the windows shake in the Boomerang Saloon!)
Or by the steersman's elbow stays to tell a seaman's tale
About the skippers and the crews in great old days of sail . . .
And I said: "My dear, although you are growing old, I know,
And as crazy and as cranky as can be,
If you'll take me for your lover, oh we'll sail the wide seas over,
You're the ship among them all that's meant for me!"

THE RHYME OF THE *CAPTIVE MAID*

A SHIP there sailed in the nitrate trade,
And she went by the name of the *Captive Maid* . . .
Built on the Clyde in 'sixty-nine
For Reid, Macallister's "Maiden" Line:
There was many a shellback used to praise
Her turn o' speed in the old-time days,
But the best of her years were over and done,
And the eighteen-nineties were all but run,
When they hung her up in a fog at last
On a half-tide reef both hard and fast,
Off Punta Arenas, outward bound
To load up nitrates for Puget Sound.
And they took to the boats, and they rowed away,
And there for a score of years she lay,
Safe and snug in a natural dock
With sandy bottom and walls of rock,
Where the biggest sea that ever did roll,
And the fiercest gale from the frozen Pole,
And the bergs and the breakers passed her by—
Passed her and left her and let her lie . . .

Nothing to hear but the wild winds crying,
Nothing to see but the grey gulls flying:

A smudge of smoke on a skyline far,
Sunset, and dawn, and a lonely star:
Frost and fog and the drifting floe,
The beating rain and the blinding snow:
An empty sea and an empty sky,
And a long, long dream of the years gone by!

A score of years—while she lay forgotten,
And her ropes decayed, and her gear grew rotten,
And her planking gaped to the sun and rain;
And her paint was tarnished with many a stain,
And the green mould caked on her idle wheel,
And the rust bit deep in her slumbering keel,
And the screaming seabirds, night and day,
Fouled with their droppings both spar and stay:
A score of years . . . while the world went round,
And thrones were shaken, and kings discrowned:
A score of years, till, every one knows,
The ships they sank and the freights they rose,
And all of a sudden somebody said:
"What about salving the *Captive Maid?*"

They came with hawsers and tugs and men,
And towed her back to the world again:
Back to the world once more—but oh,
Not the old world that she used to know!
Where were her men that served her well,
Kept her watches and struck her bell,
Learned and humoured her every whim,
Conned and steered her and watched her trim:

Scoured and painted and kept her fine,
Her decks agleam and her yards ashine ?
What of her sisters swift and tall ?
Time and the sea had claimed them all—
Seas and years and the pirate Hun
Had made an end of them every one . . .
Strange new ensigns on every breeze—
Strange new craft upon all the seas—
A ghost returned to the world of men,
Does she wish herself back on her reef again ? . . .

Nothing to hear but the wild winds crying,
Nothing to see but the grey gulls flying,
A smudge of smoke on a skyline far,
Sunset, and dawn, and a lonely star,
Frost and fog and the drifting floe,
The beating rain and the blinding snow,
An empty sea and an empty sky,
And a long, long dream of the days gone by !

PICTURES

"SOME likes picturs o' women," said Bill, "an' some likes 'orses best,"
As he fitted a pair of fancy shackles on to his old sea chest,
"But I likes picturs o' ships," said he, "an' you can keep the rest.

"An' if I was a ruddy millionaire with dollars to burn that way,
Instead of a dead-broke sailorman as never saves his pay,
I'd go to some big paintin' guy, an' this is what I'd say:

"'Paint me the *Cutty Sark*,' I'd say, 'or the old *Thermopylæ*,
Or the *Star o' Peace* as I sailed in once in my young days at sea,
Shipshape and Blackwall fashion, too, as a clipper ought to be. . . .

"'An' you might do 'er outward bound, with a sky full o' clouds,

An' the tug just dropping astern, an' gulls flyin' in
crowds,
An' the decks shiny-wet with rain, an' the wind
shakin' the shrouds. . . .

" ' Or else racin' up Channel with a sou'wester blow
in',
Stuns'ls set aloft and alow, an' a hoist o' flags showin',
An' a white bone between her teeth so's you can see
she's goin'. . . .

" ' Or you might do 'er off Cape Stiff, in the high
latitudes yonder,
With 'er main deck a smother of white, an' her lee-
rail dippin' under,
An' the big greybeards racin' by an' breakin' aboard
like thunder. . . .

" ' Or I'd like old Tuskar somewheres abound . . .
or Sydney 'Eads maybe . . .
Or a couple o' junks, if she's tradin' East, to show it's
the China Sea . . .
Or Bar Light . . . or the Tail o' the Bank . . . or a
glimp o' Circular Quay.

" ' An' I don't want no dabs o' paint as you can't
tell what they are,
Whether they're shadders, or fellers' faces, or blocks,
or blobs o' tar,
But I want gear as looks like gear, an' a spar that's
like a spar.

" ' An' I don't care if it's North or South, the Trades
or the China Sea,
Shortened down or everything set—close-hauled or
runnin' free—
You paint me a ship as is like a ship . . . an' that'll
do for me ! ' "

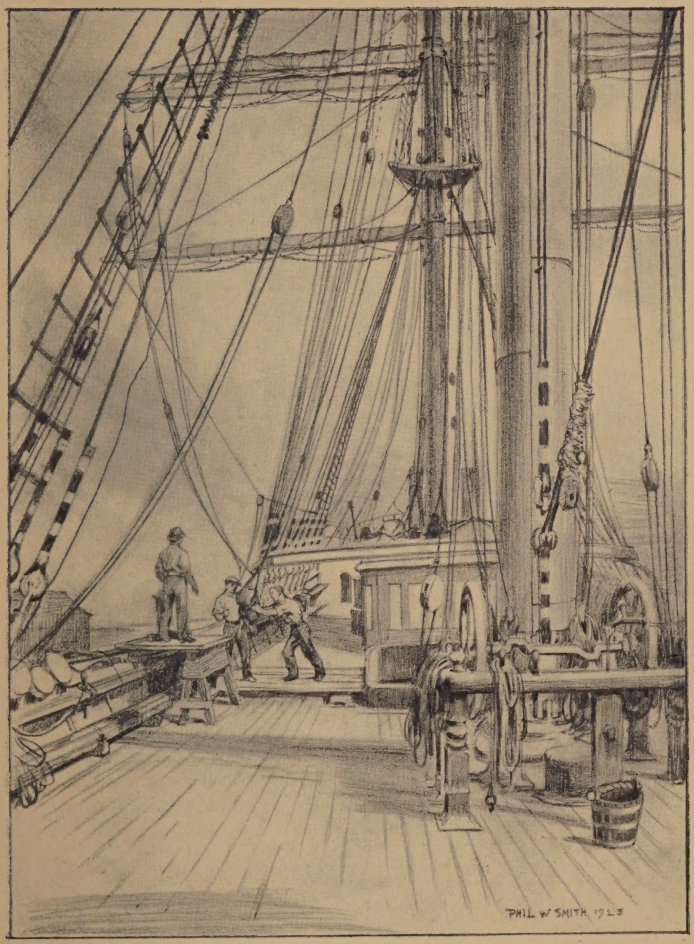
NITRATES

ALL alone I went a-walking by the London Docks one day,
For to see the ships discharging in the basins where they lay,
And the cargoes that I saw there, they were every sort and kind,
Every blessed brand of merchandise a man could bring to mind;
There were things in crates and boxes, there was stuff in bags and bales,
There were tea-chests wrapped in matting, there were Eastern-looking frails,
There were balks of teak and greenheart, there were stacks of spruce and pine,
There was cork, and frozen carcasses, and casks of Spanish wine,
There was rice and spice and coco-nuts, and rum enough was there
For to warm all London's innards up and leave a drop to spare.

But of all the freights I found there gathered in from far and wide,
All the smells both nice and nasty from the Pool to Barkingside,

All the harvest of the harbours from Bombay to Montreal,
There was one that took my fancy first and foremost of them all.
It was neither choice nor costly, it was neither rich nor rare,
And in most ways you can think of it was neither here nor there,
It was nothing over beautiful to smell nor yet to see,
Only bags of stuffy nitrates . . . but it meant a lot to me!

I forgot the swarming stevedores—I forgot the dust and din,
And the rattle of the winches hoisting cargo out and in,
And the rusty tramp before me with her hatches open wide,
And the grinding of her derricks as the sacks went overside;
I forgot the murk of London and the dull November sky;
I was far, ay, far from England in a day that's long gone by!
I forgot the thousand changes years have brought to ships and men,
And the knots on Time's old log-line that have reeled away since then,
And I saw a fast full-rigger with her swelling canvas spread,
And the steady Trade wind droning in her royals overhead,



NITRATES

Fleecy Trade clouds on the sky-line—high above the tropic blue—
And the curved arch of the foresail, and the ocean gleaming through ;
I recalled the Cape Stiff weather, when your soul-case seemed to freeze,
And the trampling, cursing watches, and the pouring, pooping seas,
And the ice on spar and jackstay, and the cracking, volleying sail,
And the tatters of our voices blowing down the roaring gale.
I recalled those West Coast harbours just as plain as yesteryear,—
Nitrate ports all dry and dusty, where they sell fresh water dear,
Little cities white and wicked on a bleak and barren shore,
With an anchor on the cliff-side for to show you where to moor,
And the sour red wine we tasted, and the foolish songs we sung,
And the girls we had our fun with in the days when we were young,
And the dancing in the evening down at Dago Bill's saloon,
And the stars above the mountains, and the sea's eternal tune.

Only bags of stuffy nitrate from a far Pacific shore
And a dreary West Coast harbour that I'll surely fetch no more,—

Only bags of stuffy nitrate, with its faint familiar
smell
Bringing back the ships and shipmates that I used
to know so well . . .
Half a lifetime lies between us, and a thousand
leagues of sea,
But it called the days departed and my boyhood
back to me!

THE TOW-ROPE GIRLS

OH, a ship in the Tropics a-foaming along,
With every stitch drawing, the Trade blowing strong,
The white caps around her all breaking in spray,
For the girls have got hold of her tow-rope to-day.

(An' it's "Haul away, girls, steady an' true,
Polly an' Dolly an' Sally an' Sue,—
Mothers an' sisters an' sweethearts an' all,
Haul away . . . all the way . . . haul away,
haul!")

She's logging sixteen as she speeds from the South,
The wind in her royals, a bone in her mouth,
With a wake like a mill-race she rolls on her way,
For the girls have got hold of her tow-rope to-day.

The old man he stood on the poop at high noon;
He paced fore and aft and he whistled a tune,
Then put by his sextant and thus he did say:
"The girls have got hold of our tow-rope to-day.

"Of cargoes and charters we've had our full share,
Of grain and of lumber enough and to spare,

Of nitrates at Taltal and rice for Bombay,
And the girls have got hold of our tow-rope to-day.

"She has dipped her yards under, hove to off the Horn,
In the fog and the floes she has drifted forlorn,
Becalmed in the Doldrums a week long she lay,
But the girls have got hold of her tow-rope to-day."

Oh, hear the good Trade wind a-singing aloud
A homeward bound shanty in sheet and in shroud,
Oh, hear how he whistles in halliard and stay:
"The girls have got hold of the tow-rope to-day!"

And it's oh! for the chops of the Channel at last,
The cheer that goes up when the tug-hawser's passed—
The mate's "That'll do"—and a fourteen months' pay—
For the girls have got hold of the tow-rope to-day. . . .

("Then haul away, girls, steady and true,
Polly an' Dolly an' Sally an' Sue,
Mothers an' sisters an' sweethearts an' all,
Haul away—all the way—haul away—haul!")

WITCHES

"FINNS, they're witches," said Murphy, "'tis born in 'em maybe,
The same as fits, an' freckles, an' follerin' the sea,
An' ginger 'air in some folks . . . an' likin' beer in me.

"Finns, they're witches," said Murphy, "an' powerful strong ones too . . .
They'll whistle a wind from nowhere, an' a storm out o' the blue
'Ud sink this 'ere old hooker, an' all her bloomin' crew.

"Finns, they're witches," said Murphy, rubbing his hairy chin,
"An' some says witchcraft's bunkum, an' some it's deadly sin,
But . . . there ain't no 'arm as I see in standin' well with a Finn."

LEE FORE BRACE

THERE was ten men hauling on the lee fore brace
In the rain an' the drivin' hail,
An' the mile-long greybeards chargin' by,
An' the thunderin' Cape Horn gale:

(That dark it was, you scarce could see
Your hand before your face;
That cold it was, our fingers froze
Stiff as they gripped the brace.

An' "Christ!" says Dan, "for a night in port
An' a Dago fiddler's tune,
An' just one whiff o' the drinks again
In a Callao saloon!")

There was ten men haulin' on the lee fore brace
When the big sea broke aboard;
Like a stream in spate, a foaming flood
Right fore an' aft it poured.

The ship, she staggered an' lay still—
So deep, so dead lay she,

You'd think she could not rise again
From such a weight of sea.

There was ten men haulin' on the lee fore brace . . .
Seven when she rose at last;
The rest was gone to the pitch-dark night,
An' the sea, an' the ice-cold blast.

An' one o' them was Dago Pete,
An' one was Lars the Dane,
An' the third was the lad whose like on earth
I shall not find again.

. . . . . .

An' I'll heave an' haul an' stand my wheel,
An' reef an' furl wi' the rest . . .
For winds an' seas go on the same,
When they've took an' drowned the best.

An' it ain't no use to curse the Lord,
Nor it ain't no sense to moan,
For a man must live his life the same,
An' keep his grief his own.

An' I'll drink my drink an' sing my song,
An' nobody'll know but me
A lump o' my heart went down with Dan
That night in the wild Horn sea!

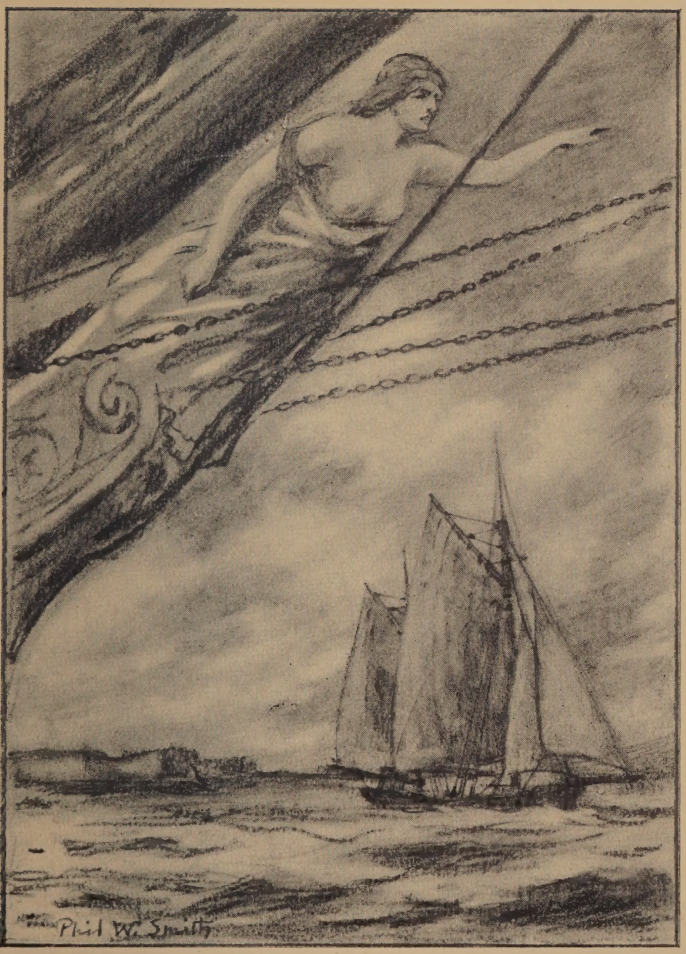
FIGUREHEADS

"YOU never see a decent figure'ead—
Not now," Bill said,
"A fiddlin' bit o' scroll-work at the bow
That's the most now . . .
But Lord! I've seen some beauties, more'n a few,
An' some rare rum uns, too.

"Folks in all sorts o' queer old-fashioned rigs—
Fellers in wigs—
Chaps in cocked 'ats an' 'elmets—lords an' dukes—
Folks out o' books—
Niggers in turbans—mandarins an' Moors—
An' 'eathen gods by scores.

'An' women in all kinds o' fancy dresses—
Queens an' princesses—
Witches on broomsticks, too—an' spankin' girls
With streamin' curls—
An' dragons, an' sea-serpents—Lord knows what
I've seen an' what I've not.

"An' some's in breakers' yards, bleached bare with time
An' thick with grime;



FIGUREHEADS

An' some stuck up in gardens here an' there
With plants for 'air;
An' no one left as knows but chaps like me
How fine with paint and gold they used to be
In them old days at sea."

PACIFIC COAST

HALF across the world to westward there's a harbour that I know,
Where the ships that load with lumber and the China liners go,—
Where the wind blows cold at sunset off the snow-crowned peaks that gleam
Out across the Straits at twilight like the landfall of a dream.

There's a sound of foreign voices—there are wafts of strange perfume—
And a two-stringed fiddle playing somewhere in an upstairs room;
There's a rosy tide lap-lapping on an old worm-eaten quay,
And a scarlet sunset flaming down behind the China Sea.

And I daresay if I went there I should find it all the same,
Still the same old sunset glory setting all the skies aflame,

Still the smell of burning forests on the quiet evening
air,—
Little things my heart remembers nowhere else on
earth but there.

Still the harbour gulls a-calling, calling all the night
and day,
And the wind across the water singing just the same
old way
As it used to in the rigging of a ship I used to know
Half across the world from England, many and many
a year ago.

She is gone beyond my finding—gone for ever, ship
and man,
Far beyond that scarlet sunset flaming down behind
Japan ;
But I'll maybe find the dream there that I lost so
long ago—
Half across the world to westward in a harbour that
I know—
Half across the world from England many and many
a year ago.

MEMORIES

"SHIPS . . . they go," said Murphy, "like a spent pay-roll . . .
They're sunk in the deep water or they're wrecked in the shoal;
Burnt or scrapped in the long run, the big ships an' small,—
An' the ships a man remembers, they're the best ships of all.

"Friends . . . they go," said Murphy, "the false an' the true,
They all go at the finish, the same as the ships do;
They go like a spree that's ended or a last year's song,
But the friends a man remembers, they're his own his life long.

"Times . . . they pass," said Murphy, "the fair and foul weather,
The good times an' the bad times, they all pass together;
Like a steersman's trick that's ended, or a blown-out squall . . .
An' the times a man remembers . . . they're the best times of all!"

STEEL RAILS

SHE sailed out o' Sunderland with a cargo o' rails—
She sailed out o' Sunderland all among the March gales;
With a cargo o' steel rails towards the Baltic she bore . . .
An' she'll sail out o' Sunderland with steel rails no more!

An' no one'll tell us, for no one'll know,
If she went at last sudden, or if she went slow,
But for all that we don't know, oh, this much is sure,
She'll sail out o' Sunderland with steel rails no more.

An' the ships out o' Sunderland, they will put forth again
Bearing up for the Baltic in the wind an' the rain,
In the wind an' the weather when the March gales do roar—
But she'll sail out o' Sunderland with steel rails no more.

An' one lot o' steel rails, oh, it's just like another,
But there's no lad the same as her own to his mother—
No lad in the world like the one that she bore . .
An' he'll sail out o' Sunderland with steel rails no more!

SO LONG

ALL coiled down, an' it's time for us to go;
Every sail's furled in a neat harbour stow;
Another ship for me, an' for her another crew—
An' so long, sailorman . . . good luck to you!

Fun an' friends I wish you till the pay's all gone—
Pleasure when you spend it an' content when it's done—
An' a chest that's not empty when you go back to sea,
An' a better ship than she's been—an' a truer pal than me.

A good berth I wish you, in a ship that's well found,
With a decent crowd forrard, an' her gear all sound,
Spars a man can trust to when it's comin' on to blow,
An' no bosun bawlin' when it's your watch below.

A good Trade I wish you, an' a fair landfall,
Neither fog, nor iceberg, nor long calm, nor squall,
A pleasant port to come to when the work's all through—
An' so long, sailorman . . . good luck to you.

A SAINT OF CORNWALL

I DON'T know who Saint Mawes was, but he surely can't have been
A stiff old stone gazebo on a carved cathedral screen,
Or a holy-looking customer rigged out in blue and red
In a sunset-coloured window with a soup-plate round his head.
But he must have been a skipper who had sailed the salt seas round
(Or at least as many of 'em as had in his time been found),
And sung his song and kissed his girl and had his share of fun,
Till he took and got religion, when his sailing days were done.

He must have had a ruddy face, a grey beard neatly trimmed,
And eyes, with crow's feet round them, neither age nor use had dimmed,
And he'd lean there on the jetty with his glass up to his eye,
And look across the Carrick Roads, and watch the ships go by,

And yarn with his old cronies of the ships he used
to know,
And shipmates that he sailed with many and many
a year ago,
In the West of England tin-boats on the Tyre and
Sidon run,
Before he got religion or his sailing days were done.

And when he came at last to die, they'd lay him
down to rest
On a green and grassy foreland sloping gently to the
west,
Where the wind's cry and the gull's cry would be
near him night and day,
And a rousing deep-sea shanty might come to him
where he lay.
And they left him there a-sleeping, for to smell the
harbour smells,
And to count the passing watches by the striking of
the bells,
And listen to the sailormen a-singing in the sun,
Like a good old master mariner whose sailing days
are done.

RHYMES OF THE RED ENSIGN (1919)

LIEUTENANT SHELLBACK, R.N.R.

HE has learnt the ways of the ships at sea
In most of the sorts of ships there be,—
In most of the kinds of deepsea craft,
Steam and squaresail and fore-and-aft,
A Liverpool crack and a London barque,
As bluff as a barge and as old as the Ark,
A tramp, a tanker, a Yankee schooner,
He's served in all of 'em later or sooner . . .

And there isn't a build, and there isn't a rig,
Be it fast or slow or little or big,
From Chapman Light to the Bay of Bengal,
But Lieutenant Shellback knows 'em all.

He has learnt the ways of the seas that roll,
Broad or narrow or deep or shoal,
Gulf and channel and bight and strait,
From the Barrier Reef to the Golden Gate:
He has learnt the ways of the winds that blow
Off palm and coral and Polar snow,
The typhoon sweeping the China seas,
And the Trades, and the stormy Westerlies . . .

And there isn't a port the wide world round
From London River to Puget Sound,
From Sand Heads Light to Vallipo Bay,
But Lieutenant Shellback's passed that way.

And some he learnt from an old-style skipper
That once cracked on in a China clipper,
And a blue-nose mate like a live cyclone,
All fist and boot and muscle and bone;
To reef and furl and hand and steer,
He knew full well by his sixteenth year,
To lift a shanty, and patch and darn,
And carve a model and spin a yarn . . .

And there wasn't so much those old salts knew,
"Sails" and bosun, skipper and crew,
From trimming yards to a fancy knot,
But Lieutenant Shellback learnt the lot.

But he learnt the most, when all's been told,
Where his fathers learnt the same of old,
In the sun and storm, in the wind and rain,
Twice round the Horn and home again . . .
He has learnt it here, he has learnt it there,
He has learnt it foul, he has learnt it fair,
Both inside out and upside down,
'Tween the Tail o' the Bank and Frisco town . . .

And there isn't a death that sailors dare
From Carrick Roads to the Straits of Le Mair,
Nor a kind of a risk that seamen run
But Lieutenant Shellback's faced each one.

That's what has made him, tried and true,
Hardened and tested and proved him too—
Born and bred to the sailor's trade,
Hemp to the core and cable-laid,
Like the nine-strand stuff that a seaman knows
Will hold and hold till the last strand goes . . .
And whether he's fighting, or sweeping, or towing,
And whether it's hailing, or raining, or blowing,
Whether he's out on the U-boat trail,
Or saving a crew in a North Sea gale,
There isn't a job you can find him to do
But Lieutenant Shellback will carry it through.

MERCHANTMEN

ALL honour be to merchantmen,
And ships of all degree,
In warlike dangers manifold
Who sail and keep the sea,—
In peril of unlitten coast
And death-besprinkled foam,
Who daily dare a hundred deaths
To bring their cargoes home.

A liner out of Liverpool—a tanker from the Clyde—
A hard-run tramp from anywhere—a tug from Merseyside—
A cattle-boat from Birkenhead—a coaler from the Tyne—
All honour be to merchantmen while any star shall shine!

All honour be to merchantmen,
And ships both great and small,
The swift and strong to run their race
(And smite their foes withal),
The little ships that sink or swim,
And pay the pirates' toll,
Unarmoured save by valiant hearts
And strong in nought but soul.

All honour be to merchantmen
So long as tides shall run,
Who gave the seas their glorious dead
From rise to set of sun:
All honour be to merchantmen
While England's name shall stand,
Who sailed and fought, and dared and died,
And served and saved their land!

A sailing ship from Liverpool,—a tanker from the Clyde—
A schooner from the West Countrie—a tug from Merseyside—
A fishing smack from Grimsby town—a coaler from the Tyne—
All honour be to merchantmen while sun and moon do shine!

THE *GOOD INTENT*

(The ketch *Good Intent*, built at Plymouth of British oak 128 years ago, is probably the oldest British merchant-vessel afloat.)

THEY built her in the olden days,
They built her strong, they built her stout,
In Farmer George's golden days
It must have been or thereabout.

They knew no rush or hustle then,
They drove no rivets racing time:
A sort of pleasant bustle then
Filled up the hours from chime to chime.

With care and pains they'd linger on
Each chisel touch and mallet stroke,
And lay a loving finger on
Her curving sides of Devon oak.

And so they worked, and so she grew
From garboard unto gunwale strake,
And if uncommon slow she grew
They built to last and no mistake.

Well, finish her they did at last;
Sparred, rigged and fitted, forth she went,
And out to sea she slid at last—
The ketch of Plymouth, *Good Intent.*

She went—and Lord! she's going still,
The same old sea's beneath her bow,
The same old winds are blowing still,
The same old skies behold her now.

A stout West-country crew she had,
And paid them at the capstan head:
A seasoned skipper too she had,
Whose sons—and grandsons—all are dead.

The coast from north to south she knows,
Its tiny ports and sleepy piers
From Hull to Avonmouth she knows,
She's used them for a hundred years.

The Channel lights they wink at her
(They've done it at her cargoes too):
The friendly stars they blink at her
The way they always used to do.

Old *Téméraire* she may have seen,
And curtseyed to the *Victory,*
And many a ding-dong fight have seen,
For those were lively days at sea.

The packets in their day were new,
And many a bluff East Indiaman;
She saw 'em all when they were new,
Since first her sailing days began.

She saw, she waved them on their way,
Trim brig and plunging seventy-four,
And one and all they've gone their way,
Like clouds that pass and are no more.

Frigate and sloop and battleship,
She's seen 'em come, she's seen 'em go,
Red tramp and reeking cattleship,
And China clipper winged like snow.

And still her old luck nods to her,
And, be it peace or be it war,
It doesn't make much odds to her—
She's lived in rousing times before.

. . . . . .

They might not count as skilled to-day
In her old hull whose lesson's hid:
"God send our shipwrights build to-day
As honest as their grandads did!"

THE YARN OF THE BLUE STAR LINE

WHEN I was a lad and went to sea,
In Seventy-seven or six maybe,
There was ten tall ships on Merseyside
Did sail or berth with every tide:
There was "Hills" and "Halls" and "Dales" and
"Bens,"
"Counties" and "Cities" and "Lochs" and
"Glens,"
But none there was so fast and fine
As them that sailed in the Blue Star Line.

They had tough-nut skippers as hard as nails
To crack 'em along in the Cape Horn gales,
And hard-case shellbacks thirty-two
There used to be in a Blue Star crew,—
To man the capstan, and raise the shout
At tacks and sheets when she went about,
And brassbound reefers eight or nine
In them tall ships of the Blue Star Line.

But Lord! the names them good ships had,—
Enough to drive a plain man mad!
The way them names was spelled and said
'Ud crack your jaw like Liverpool bread:

There was *Parthen-ope* and *Thucydides*,
And a whole lot more and worse besides,
And *Melpo-mene* and *Euphrosyne*
Was the sort o' names in the Blue Star Line.

But the steam come up and the sail went down,
And them tall ships of high renown
Was scrapped, or wrecked, or sold away
To the Dutch or the Dagoes, day by day:
They went the way of the songs we sung,
And the girls we kissed when we all were young,
And most o' the chaps as used to sign
Along wi' me in the Blue Star Line.

The *Parthen-ope* she met her fate
Run down in a fog off the Golden Gate,
And the *Thucy-dides* kept knocking around
'Tween the Cape and Cardiff and Puget Sound,
Till a fire in her main hold burned her down
To the water's edge at Simonstown . . .
And none was left but the *Euphrosyne*—
The bloomin' last o' the Blue Star Line.

There isn't a cargo great or small,
But that old hooker's carried 'em all:
For whether it's rubber or whether it's rice,
Coal or copra or salt or spice,
Teak or whale oil or bone manure,
Smelly guano or copper ore,
Gulf Ports cotton or B.C. pine,
All's one to the last of the Blue Star Line.

There isn't a tugboat far or near
But's took her to sea with a parting cheer,
Or picked her up off o' Lizard Head
With nine months' rust in her hawse pipes red:
There isn't a pilot near or far
From Gravesend Reach to Astoria Bar,
On Hudson or Hooghly or Thames or Tyne,
But's known the last o' the Blue Star Line.

She's been up and down, and here and there,
But there ain't no time for to tell you where:
She's been sunk and raised, and drove ashore,
A wreck, and a hulk, and a prize of war . . .
But she's gone at the last, as I've heard tell,
In the Channel chops as she knowed so well,
Off Saint Agnes light where a drifting mine
Done in the last o' the Blue Star Line.

And it's good to know as she took her bones,
When it come to the last, to Davy Jones,
With the old Red Duster flying the same
As it did in the days when she earned her fame,
When ten tall ships on Merseyside
Did sail or berth with every tide,
And none o' them all so fast and fine
As them tall ships o' the Blue Star Line.

SHIPMATE SORROW

I WAS shipmates with Sorrow in a day gone by:
We shared wheel and look-out, old Sorrow and I:
Good times and bad times, foul weather and fair,
The old grey face of him was always there.

There was never shanty raised there, never song I heard,
But his voice would be in it like a crying bird:
I was dull in the dog watches when the laugh went free
Because of old Sorrow sitting down by me.

I thought I could lose him in the stir and change
Of bright wicked cities all sunlit and strange:
There came a hand at my elbow and a voice in my ear—
It was old patient Sorrow saying: "Lad, I'm here!'

And by the bustling harbour, up the busy street,
Many a time I see him, many a time I meet
The old grey face there of one I used to know . . .
And it's old shipmate Sorrow out of long ago.

And the watch at the halliards, they may sing with a will,
But the voice I used to hear, oh I think I hear it still,
Like the wind in a shroud piping, or a seabird's cry . . .
And it's old Sorrow singing out of times gone by!

A CHANNEL RHYME

START POINT and Beachy Head
Tell their tale of quick and dead.

Forelands both and Dungeness
See many a ship in dire distress.

The Lizard and the Longships know
Oft the end of friend and foe.

And many and many a seaman's knell
Has been rung by Manacles bell.

Gull and Dodman ask aright
A wide berth on a dirty night.

Bolt Head and Bolt Tail
Are ill spots in a Channel gale.

Over nigh to Portland Bill
In Channel fog it's just as ill.

And Wolf Rock and Seven Stones
Rest their feet on sailors' bones.

But from Nore Light to Cape Cornwall
Goodwin Sands are worst of all!

THE OLD SHELLBACK

BY Murphy's Hotel as I loitered along
I heard an old shellback a-singing his song,
A crazy old chorus, a song of no skill,
In a voice that was boozy, and broken, and shrill.

A roaring old song of the ships and the men
In fine days departed which come not again . . .
With the chink of the glasses came drifting the tune
And the smell of the drinks out o' Murphy's saloon.

I stood there to hear it, and swift as I heard
My soul like a ship was awakened and stirred,
Like a vessel becalmed when she quivers to feel
The kiss of the Trade from her truck to her keel.

Then fast fled my heart down the seas and the years,
And the winds of the world they blew loud in my ears,
The winds of the ocean recalling to me
Lost things and lovely, like dawns on the sea.

Lips that have smiled on me . . . friends who are fled . . .
All that was Life in the time that is sped . . .

Laughter of long ago . . . frolics gone by
In the ports of the West where the windjammers lie.

Nights off the Horn, and the ice on our spars. . .
Tall skysail clippers a-raking the spars . . .
With a "blow the man up, bullies, blow the man
down" . . .
And a crew of hard cases from Liverpool town!

SMALL CRAFT (1917)

SMALL CRAFT

WHEN Drake sailed out from Devon to
break King Philip's pride,
He had great ships at his bidding and
little ones beside,
Revenge was there and *Lion*, and others known to
fame,
And likewise he had Small Craft (which hadn't any
name !).

Small Craft—Small Craft—to harry and to flout
'em !
Small Craft—Small Craft—you cannot do without
'em !
Their deeds are unrecorded, their names are never
seen,
But we know that there were Small Craft—because
there must have been !

When Nelson was blockading for three long years
and more,
With many a bluff first-rater and oaken seventy-
four,

To share the fun and fighting, the good chance and the bad,
Oh, he had also Small Craft—because he must have had!

Upon the skirts of battle from Sluys to Trafalgar
We know that there were Small Craft—because there always are!
Yacht, sweeper, sloop, and drifter—to-day as yesterday
The big ships fight the battles—but the Small Craft clear the way.

They scout before the squadrons when mighty fleets engage,
They glean War's dreadful harvest when the fight has ceased to rage:
Too great they count no hazard, no task beyond their power:
And merchantmen bless Small Craft a hundred times an hour!

In Admirals' despatches their names are seldom heard,
They justify their being by more than written word:
In battle, toil and tempest, and dangers manifold,
The doughty deeds of Small Craft will never all be told.

Scant ease and scantier leisure—they take no heed
of these,
For men lie hard in Small Craft when storm is on
the seas :
A long watch and a weary from dawn to set of sun—
The men who serve in Small Craft, their work is
never done.

And if, as chance may have it, some bitter day they
lie
Outclassed, out-gunned, out-numbered, with nought
to do but die,
When the last gun's out of action, good-bye to ship
and crew—
But men die hard in Small Craft, as they will always
do !

Oh, Death comes once to each man, and the game
it pays for all,
And Duty is but Duty, in great ship and in small,
And it will not vex their slumbers, or make less
sweet their rest,
Though there's never a big black headline for Small
Craft going west.

Great ships and mighty captains—to these their
meed of praise,
For patience, skill and daring, and loud victorious
days,—
To every man his portion, as is both right and fair,
But oh ! forget not Small Craft, for they have done
their share.

Small Craft—Small Craft—from Scapa Flow to Dover :
Small Craft—Small Craft—all the wide world over :
At risk of war and shipwreck, torpedo, mine and shell,
All honour be to Small Craft, for oh ! they've earned it well !

ADMIRAL DUGOUT

HE had done with fleets and squadrons, with the restless, roaming seas,
He had found the quiet haven he desired,
And he lay there to his moorings with the dignity and ease
Most becoming to Rear-Admirals (retired).
He was reared 'mid "Spit and Polish," he was bred to "stick and string"—
All the things the ultra-moderns never name:
But a wind blew up to seaward, and it meant the Real Thing,
And he had to slip his cable when it came.

So he hied him up to London, for to hang about Whitehall,
And he sat upon the steps there soon and late:
He importuned night and morning, he bombarded great and small,
From messengers to Ministers of State.
He was like a guilty conscience, he was like a ghost unlaid,
He was like a debt of which you can't get rid,

Till the Powers that Be, despairing, in a fit of temper, said,
"For the Lord's sake give him something"—
and they did!

They commissioned him a trawler with a high and raking bow,
Black and workmanlike as any pirate craft,
With a crew of steady seamen very handy in a row,
And a brace of little barkers fore and aft.
And he blessed the Lord his Maker when he faced the North Sea sprays,
And exceedingly extolled his lucky star,
That had given his youth renewal in the evening of his days
(With the rank of Captain Dugout, R.N.R.).

He is jolly as a sandboy, he is happier than a king;
And his trawler is the darling of his heart,
(With her cuddy like a cupboard where a kitten couldn't swing,
And a scent of fish that simply won't depart).
He has found upon occasion sundry targets for his guns,
He could tell you tales of mine and submarine,
Oh the holes he's in and out of, and the glorious risks he runs
Turn his son (who's in a Super-Dreadnought) green.

He is fit as any fiddle, he is hearty, hale and tanned;
He is proof against the coldest gales that blow,
He has never felt so lively since he got his first command,
(Which is rather more than forty years ago).
And of all the joyful picnics of his wild and wandering youth,
Little dust-ups 'tween Taku and Zanzibar,
There was none to match the picnic, he declares in sober sooth,
That he has as Captain Dugout, R.N.R.

"SHIPS THAT PASS"

(An Episode of the Cruiser Patrol)

THERE are ships that pass in the night-time, some poet has told us how,
But a ship that passed in the daytime is the one I'm thinking of now,
Where the seas roll green from the Arctic and the wind comes keen from the Pole,
'Tween Rockall Bank and the Shetlands, up North on the long patrol.

We sighted her one day early: the forenoon watch was begun,
There was mist like wool on the water, and a glimpse of a pale cold sun,
And she came through the dim grey weather—a thing of wonder and gleam,
From the port o' the Past on a bowline, closehauled on a wind of dream.

The rust of years was upon her—she was weathered by many a gale—
The flag of a Dago republic went up to her peak at our hail;

But I knew her—Lord God! I knew her, as how could I help but know
The ship that I served my time in, no matter how long ago!

I'd have climbed to her royals blindfold, I'd have known her spars in a crowd:
Aloft and alow, I knew her, brace and halliard and shroud—
From the scrollwork under her stern ports to the paint on her figurehead—
And the shout "All hands" on her maindeck would have tumbled me up from the dead.

She moved like a queen on the water, with the grace that was hers of yore,
The sun on her shining canvas—what had she to do with war,
With a world that is full of trouble and seas that are stained with crime?
She came like a dream remembered, dreamt once in a happier time.

She was youth, and its sorrow that passes—the light, the laughter, the joy,
The South, and the small white cities, and the care-free heart of a boy,
The farewell flash of the Fastnet to light you the whole world round,
And the hoot of the tug at parting—and the song of the homeward bound.

The sun, and the flying-fish weather—night, and a fiddle's tune—
And palms, and the warm maize-yellow of a low West Indian moon—
Storm in the high South latitudes—and the boom of a Trade-filled sail—
And the anchor watch in the tropics, and the old Sou' Spainer's tale.

Was it the lap of the wave I heard or the chill wind's cry,
Or a snatch of a deep-sea shanty I knew in the years gone by?
Was it the whine of the gear in the sheaves, or the seagulls' call,
Or the ghost of my shipmates' voices, tallying on to the fall?

. . . . . .

I went through her papers duly—and no one, I hope, could see
A freight of the years departed was the cargo she bore for me!
I talked with her Dago captain while we searched her for contraband,
And . . . I longed for one grip of her wheel-spokes like a grip of a friend's right hand.

And I watched while her helm went over, and the sails were sheeted home,
And under her moving forefoot the bubbles broke into foam,

Till she faded from sight in the greyness—a thing of
wonder and gleam,
For the port of the Past on a bowline—closehauled
on a wind of dream!

"LET HER GO!"

(A Tramp Shanty)

'ER keel was laid in Seventy-four,
(Let 'er go—let 'er go!)
They built 'er cheap, an' they scamped 'er sore,
'Er rivets was putty, 'er plates was poor,
An' then come in the Plimsoll line,
Or I wouldn't be singin' this song o' mine.
(Let 'er go!)

She was cranky an' foul, she was stubborn an' slow
(Let 'er go—let 'er go!)
An' she shipped it green when it come on to blow:
'Er crews was starved, an' the pay was low,
An' 'er bloomin' owners was ready to faint
At a scrape o' pitch or a penn'orth o' paint.
(Let 'er go!)

But she's been 'ere, an' she's been there
(Let 'er go—let 'er go!)
An' she's been almost everywhere:
An' wherever you went you'd sure see *'er*,

With 'er rust-red hawse an' 'er battered old funnel,
All muck an' dirt from 'er keel to 'er gun'le.
(Let 'er go!)

She's earned 'er keep in a number o' climes,
(Let 'er go—let 'er go!)
She's changed 'er name a number o' times
Which won't fit right into these 'ere rhymes:
But the name of 'er now is the *Sound o' Mull*—
Built on the Tyne an' sails out of 'Ull.
(Let 'er go!)

'Er keel was laid in Seventy-four
(Let 'er go—let 'er go!)
An' a breaker's price was 'er price before
The ships was scarce an' the freights did soar:
But she's fetched 'er fourteen pound a ton
On the Baltic Exchange since the war begun.
(Let 'er go!)

So she's doin' 'er bit, which we all must do
(Let 'er go—let 'er go!)
An' whether she's old or whether she's new
Don't make much odds to a war-time crew:
An' 'ooever's sunk, or 'ooever's drowned,
The *Sound o' Mull* keeps pluggin' around.
(Let 'er go!)

An' when she goes, by night or by day,
(Let 'er go—let 'er go!)

Either up or down, as she likely may,
I only 'ope as somebody 'll say,
" 'Er keel was laid in Seventy-four,
She done 'er best, an' she couldn't do more:
She warn't no swell, nor she warn't no beauty,
But she come by 'er end in the way of 'er duty.
(Let 'er go!) "

IN PRIZE

A SHIP was built in Glasgow, and oh, she looked a daisy—
(Just the way that some ships do!)
An' the only thing against her was she allus steered so crazy.
(An' it's true, my Johnnie Bowline, true!)

They sent 'er out in ballast to Oregon for lumber,
An' before she dropped 'er pilot she all but lost 'er number.

They sold 'er into Norway because she steered so funny,
An' she nearly went to glory before they drawed the money.

They sold 'er out o' Norway—they sold 'er into Chile,
And Chile got a bargain because she steered so silly.

They chartered 'er to Germans with a bunch o' greasers forrard:
Old shellbacks wouldn't touch 'er because she steered so 'orrid.

She set a course for Bremen with contraband inside 'er,
An' she might 'ave got there sometime if a cruiser 'adn't spied 'er.

She nearly drowned the boarders because she cut such capers,
But they found she was a German through inspectin' of her papers.

So they put a crew aboard 'er, which was both right an' lawful,
An' the prize crew 'ad a picnic because she steered so awful.

But they brought 'er into Kirkwall, an' then they said, "Lord lumme
If I ever see an 'ooker as steered so kind o' rummy!"

But she'll fetch 'er price at auction, for oh, she looks a daisy
(Just the way that some ships do!)
An' the chap as tops the biddin' won't know she steers so crazy.
(But it's true, my Johnnie Bowline, true!)

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